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The works of the late Rev.
Stephen Charnock

THE

WORKS

OF THE LATE

REV. STEPHEN CHARNOCK, B.D.

IN

NINE VOLUMES.

WITH A

PREFATORY DEDICATION AND MEMOIR,

BY

EDWARD PARSONS.

VOL. II.

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GOD's KNOWLEDGE.

Psalm 147. 5.

GREAT IS OUR LORD, AND OF GREAT POWER: HIS UNDERSTANDING IS INFINITE.

PART I.

EXPOSITION OF THE TEXT, AND GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

Believers delight to celebrate the perfection of God—His care of all men, particularly of his church—Heals the broken hearted—Tells the number of the stars—Infinity of his power and understanding—Acknowledged by all nations—What knowledge there is in God—Knowledge of intelligence—Speculative and practical—His knowledge of approbation—Must ascribe universal knowledge to God.

IT is uncertain who was the author of this Psalm, and when it was penned; some think after the return from the Babylonish captivity. It is a Psalm of praise, and is made up of matter of praise from the beginning to the end; God's benefits to the church, his providence over his creatures; the essential excellency of his nature. The psalmist doubles his exhortation to praise God, ver. 1. *Praise ye the Lord, sing praise to our God;* to praise

him from his dominion as Lord; from his grace and mercy as *our God;* from the excellency of the duty itself, *it is good, it is comely*: some read it comely, some lovely or desirable, from the various derivation of the word.

Nothing *so much delights* a gracious soul, as an opportunity of *celebrating the perfections and goodness of the Creator.* The highest duties a creature can render to the Creator are pleasant and delightful in themselves, *it is comely.* Praise is a duty that affects the whole soul. The praise of God is a decent thing; the excellency of God's nature deserves it, and the benefits of God's grace requires it. It is comely when done as it ought to be, with the heart as well as with the voice: a sinner sings ill though his voice be good; the soul in it is to be elevated above earthly things.

The first *matter* of praise, is God's erecting and preserving his church, ver. 2. *The Lord doth build up Jerusalem, he gathers together the out-casts of Israel:* the walls of demolished Jerusalem are now re-edified: God hath brought back the captivity of Jacob, and reduced his people from their Babylonish exile, and those that were dispersed into strange regions he hath restored to their habitations. Or it may be prophetic of the calling of the Gentiles, and the gathering the out-casts of the spiritual Israel, that were before as *without God in the world, and strangers to the covenant of promise.* Let God be praised, but especially for building up his church, and gathering the Gentiles, before counted as *out-casts. Isa.* 11. 12. He gathers them in this world to the faith, and hereafter to glory.

Obs. 1. From the two first verses observe, all people are under God's care: but he has *a particular regard for his church.* This is the signet on his hand, as a bracelet upon his arm; this is his garden which he delights to dress; if he prunes it, it is to purge it; if he digs about his vine, and wounds the branches, it is to make it more beautiful with new clusters, and restore it to a fruitful vigour.

2. All great deliverances are to be *ascribed to God,* as

the principal author, whosoever are the instruments. *The Lord doth build up Jerusalem, he gathers together the out-casts of Israel.* This great deliverance from Babylon is not to be ascribed to Cyrus or Darius, or the rest of our favourers; it is the Lord that doth it; we had his promise for it, we have now his performance. Let us not ascribe that which is the effect of his truth, only to the good will of men; it is God's act, *not by might, nor by power,* nor by weapons of war, or strength of horses, but by the Spirit of the Lord. He sent prophets to comfort us while we were exiles; and now he hath stretched out his own arm to work our deliverance, according to his word; blind man looks so much upon instruments, that he hardly takes notice of God, either in afflictions or mercies, and this is the cause that robs God of so much prayer and praise in the world.

Ver. 3, *He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.* He hath now restored those who had no hope but in his word; he hath dealt with them as a tender and skilful surgeon; he hath applied his healing power, and dropped in his sovereign balsams; he hath now furnished our fainting hearts with refreshing cordials. How gracious is God, that restores liberty to the captives, and righteousness to the penitent; man's misery is the fittest opportunity for God to make his mercy illustrious in itself, and most welcome to the patient.

He proceeds verse 4. Wonder not that God calls together the out-casts, and singles them out from every corner, for their return; why can he not do this, as well as *tell the number of the stars, and call them all by their names?*

There are none of his people so despicable in the eye of man, but they are known and regarded by God; though they are clouded in the world, yet they are the stars of the world; and shall God number the inanimate stars in the heavens, and make no account of his living stars on the earth? No, wherever they are dispersed, he will not forget them; however they are afflicted, he will not disperse them: the stars are so numerous, that they are innumerable by man; some are visible and known

by men, others lie more hid and undiscovered in a confused light, as those in the milky-way, man cannot see one of them distinctly. God knows all his people. As he can do what is above the power of man to perform, so he understands what is above the skill of man to discover; shall man measure God by his scantiness? Proud man must not equal himself to God, nor cut God as short as his own line.

He tells the number of the stars, and calls them all by their names. He hath them all in his list; as generals the names of their soldiers in the muster-roll, for they are his host, which he *marshals in the heavens*, as *Isa.* 40. 26, where you have the like expression; he knows them more distinctly than man can know any thing, and so distinctly as to call *them all by their names:* He knows their names, that is, their natural offices, influences, the different degrees of heat and light, their order and motion; and all of them, the least glimmering star as well as the most glaring planet; this man cannot do; *tell the stars if thou be able to number them, Gen.* 15. 5, saith God to Abraham, whom Josephus represents as a great astronomer; yea, they cannot be numbered, Jer. 33. 22, and the uncertainty of the opinions of men, evidenceth their ignorance of their number; some reckoning 1022, others 1025, others 1098, others 7000, besides those that by reason of their mixture of light with one another, cannot be distinctly discerned, and others perhaps so high, as not to be reached by the eye of man. To impose names on things, and names according to their natures, is both an argument of power and dominion, and of wisdom and understanding: from the imposition of names upon the creatures by Adam, the knowledge of Adam is generally concluded; and it was also a fruit of that dominion God allowed him over the creatures. Now he that numbers and names the stars that seem to lie confused among one another, as well as those that appear to us in an unclouded night, may well be supposed accurately to know his people, though lurking in secret caverns, and know those that are fit to be instru-

ments of their deliverance; the one is as easy to him as the other; and the number of the one as distinctly known by him, as the multitude of the other.

For great is our Lord, and of great power, his understanding is infinite, ver. 5. He wants not knowledge to know the objects, nor power to effect his will concerning them. *Of great power.* Much power, plenteous in power; so the word רב is rendered *Psal.* 5. 15, a multitude of power, as well as a multitude of mercy; a power that exceeds all created power and understanding. *His understanding is infinite.* You may not imagine how he can call all the stars by name; the multitude of visible being so great, and the multitude of the invisible being greater; but you must know that as God is Almighty, so he is omniscient; and as there is no end of his power, so no account can exactly be given of his understanding; *His understanding is infinite.* No number or account of it; אוקמפר and so the same words are rendered, *Joel* 1. 6; *A nation strong*, and *without number:* No end of his understanding, Syriac, no measure, no bounds. His essence is infinite, and so is his power and understanding; and vast is his knowledge, that we can no more comprehend it than we can measure spaces that are without limits, or tell the minutes or hours of eternity. Who then can fathom that whereof there is no number, but which exceeds all, so that there is no *searching of it out?* He knows universals, he knows particulars. We must not take understanding here, as noting a faculty, but the use of the understanding in the knowledge of things, and the judgment in the consideration of them, and so it is often used.

In the verse there is a description of God;—1. In his essence, *great is our Lord.* 2. In his power, *of great power.* 3. In his knowledge, *his understanding is infinite;* his understanding is his eye, and his power is his arm. Of his *infinite understanding* I am to discourse.

Doctrine. God hath an *infinite* knowledge and understanding. All knowledge. Omnipresence which we spake of before, respects his essence; omniscience respects his understanding, according to our manner of conception.

This is clear in scripture; hence God is called a God of knowledge, 1 *Sam.* 2. 3, *The Lord is a God of knowledge*, Heb. *knowledges* in the plural number, of all kind of knowledge; it is spoken there to quell man's pride in his own reason and parts; what is the knowledge of man but a spark to the whole element of fire, a grain of dust, and worse than nothing, in comparison of the knowledge of God, as his essence is in comparison of the essence of God? All kind of knowledge. He knows what angels know, what man knows, and infinitely more; he knows himself, his own operations, all his creatures, the notions and thoughts of them; he is understanding above understanding, mind above mind, the mind of minds, the light of lights; this the Greek word Θεὸς signifies in the etymology of it, of Θεᾶσθαι to see, to contemplate; and δαίμων of δαίω scio. The names of God signify a nature viewing and piercing all things; and the attribution of our senses to God in scripture, as hearing and seeing, which are the senses whereby knowledge enters into us, signifies God's knowledge.

1. The notion of God's knowledge of all things lies *above the ruins of nature;* it was not obliterated by the fall of man. It was necessary offending man was to know that he had a Creator whom he had injured, that he had a Judge to try and punish him; since God had thought fit to keep up the world, it had been kept up to no purpose had not this notion been continued alive in the minds of men; there would not have been any practice of his laws, no bar to the worst of crimes. If men had thought they had to deal with an ignorant Deity, there could be no practice of religion. Who would lift up his eyes, or spread his hands towards heaven, if he imagined his devotions were directed to a God as blind as the heathens imagined fortune? To what end would it be for them to make heaven and earth resound with their cries, if they had not thought God had an eye to see them, and an ear to hear them? And indeed the very notion of a God at the first blush, speaks him a being endowed with understanding; no man can imagine a Creator void of one of the noblest perfections belonging

to those creatures that are the flower and cream of his works.

2. Therefore *all nations acknowledge this,* as well as the existence and being of God. No nation but had their temples, particular ceremonies of worship, and presented their sacrifices, which they could not have been so vain as to do, without an acknowledgment of this attribute. This notion of God's knowledge owed not its rise to tradition, but to natural implantation; it was born and grew up with every rational creature. Though the several nations and men of the world agreed not in one kind of Deity, or in their sentiments of his nature or other perfections, some judging him clothed with a fine and pure body; others judging him an uncompounded spirit; some fixing him to a seat in the heavens; others owning his universal presence in all parts of the world; yet they all agreed in the universality of his knowledge; and their own consciences reflecting their crimes, unknown to any but themselves, would keep this notion in some vigour whether they would or no. Now this being implanted in the minds of all men by nature, cannot be false; for nature imprints not in the minds of all men an assent to a falsity. Nature would not pervert the reason and minds of men: universal notions of God are from original, not lapsed nature, and preserved in mankind in order to a restoration from a lapsed state. The heathens acknowledged this; in all the solemn covenants,* solemnized with oaths and the invocation of the name of God, this attribute was supposed. They confessed knowledge to be peculiar to the Deity; *Scientia deorum vita,* saith Cicero. Some called him Νȣς, *men's mind,* pure understanding, without any mote Ἐπόπτης, the inspector of all. As they called him life because he was the author of life; so they called him *intellectus,* because he was the author of all knowledge and understanding in his creatures. And one being asked, Whether any man could be hid from God? said no, not so much as *thinking.* Some call him the

* Agamemnon. Homer, Il. 3. v. 8. making a covenant with Priam invocates the sun Ἥλιος ἃς πάντ' ἐφορᾶς κὶα πάντ' ἐπακȣεις.

eye of the world;* and the Egyptians represented God by an eye on the top of a sceptre, because God is all eye, and can be ignorant of nothing.

And the same nation made eyes and ears of the most excellent metals, consecrating them to God, and hanging them up in the midst of their temples, in signification of God's seeing and hearing all things; hence they called God light, as well as the scripture, because all things are visible to him.

For the better understanding of this, we will enquire, 1. What kind of knowledge or understanding there is in God. 2. What God knows. 3. How God knows things. 4. The proof that God knows all things. 5. The use of all to ourselves.

1. *What kind* of understanding or knowledge there is in God. The knowledge of God in scripture has various names, according to the various relations or objects of it. In respect of *present* things, it is called knowledge or sight; with respect of things *past*, remembrance; in respect of things *future*, or to *come*, it is called fore-knowledge, or prescience, 1 *Pet.* 1. 2. In regard of the universality of the objects, it is called omniscience; in regard of the simple understanding of things, it is called knowledge; in regard of acting, and modelling the ways of acting, it is called wisdom and prudence, *Eph.* 1. 8. He must have knowledge, otherwise he could not be wise; wisdom is the flower of knowledge, and knowledge is the root of wisdom.

As to *what* this knowledge is; if we know what knowledge is in man, we may apprehend what it is in God, removing all imperfection from it, and ascribing to him the most eminent way of understanding; because we cannot comprehend God, but as he is pleased to condescend to us in his own ways of discovery; that is, under some way of similitude to his most perfect creatures; therefore we have a notion of God by his understanding and will; understanding, whereby he conceives and apprehends things; will, whereby he extends himself in acting

* Gamach in 1 p. Aqui. q. 14. cap. 1. p. 119. Clem. Alexand. strom. lib. 6.

according to his wisdom, and whereby he approves or disapproves. Yet we must not measure his understanding by our own, or think it to be of so gross a temper as a created mind; that he hath *eyes or flesh*, or *sees* or knows *as man sees*, *Job* 10. 4. We can no more measure his knowledge by ours, than we can measure his essence by our essence: as he hath an incomprehensible essence, to which ours is but as a drop of a bucket; so he hath an incomprehensible knowledge to which ours is but as a grain of dust, or mere darkness: *His thoughts are above our thoughts, as the heavens are above the earth.*

The knowledge of God is variously divided by the schools, and acknowledged by all divines. 1. A knowledge *visionis & simplicis intelligentiæ;* the one we may call a sight, the other an understanding; the one refers to sense, the other to the mind. 2. A knowledge of *vision* or *sight*; thus God knows himself and all things that really were, are, or shall be in time; all those things which he hath decreed to be, though they are not yet actually sprung up in the world, but lie couchant in their causes.

First, a knowledge of *intelligence*, or simple understanding; the object of this is not things that are in being, or that shall by any decree of God ever be existent in the world; but such things as are possible to be wrought by the power of God, though they shall never come into being, but lie for ever wrapped up in darkness and nothing.* This also is a necessary knowledge to be allowed to God, because the object of this knowledge is necessary. The possibility of more creatures than ever were or shall be, is a conclusion that hath a necessary truth in it; as it is necessary that the power of God can produce more creatures, though it be not necessary that it should produce more creatures; so it is necessary that whatsoever the power of God *can* work, is possible to be. And as God knows this possibility, so he knows all the objects that are thus possible; and herein doth much consist the infiniteness of his knowledge as shall be shewn presently.

* Suarez de Deo lib. 3. cap. 4. p. 230.

These two kinds of knowledge differ: that of vision, is of things which God hath decreed to be, though they are not yet. That of intelligence, is of things which never shall be; yet they may be, or are possible to be, if God please to will and order their being; one respects things that shall be, the other things that may be, and are not repugnant to the nature of God to be: the knowledge of vision follows the act of God's will, and supposeth an act of God's will before, decreeing things to be. If we could suppose any first or second in God's decree, we might say God knew them as possible before he decreed them; he knew them as future because he decreed them. For without the will of God decreeing a thing to come to pass, God cannot know that it will infallibly come to pass. But the knowledge of intelligence stands without any act of his will, in order to the being of those things which he knows; he knows possible things only in his power; he knows other things both in his power, as able to effect them; and in his will, as determining the being of them; such knowledge we must grant to be in God, for there is such a kind of knowledge in man; for man doth not only know and see what is before his eyes in this world, but he may have conceptions of many more worlds, and many more creatures, which he knows are possible to the power of God.

2. Secondly, There is a *speculative* and *practical* knowledge in God.

1. A *speculative* knowledge is, when the truth of a thing is known without a respect to any working or practical operation. The knowledge of things possible is in God only speculative,* and some say God's knowledge of himself, is only speculative, because there is nothing for God to work in himself: And though he knows himself, yet this knowledge of himself doth not terminate there, but flowers into love of, and delight in himself; yet this love and delight is not enough to make it a practical knowledge because it is natural, and naturally and necessarily flows from the knowledge of himself and his

* Suarez de Deo, lib. 3. cap. 4. p. 138.

own goodness: he cannot but love himself, and delight in himself, upon the knowledge of himself. But that which is properly practice, is where there is a dominion over the action, and it is wrought not naturally and necessarily, but in a way of freedom and counsel. As when we see a beautiful flower, or other thing, there ariseth a delight in the mind; this no man will call practice, because it is a natural affection of the will, arising from the virtue of the object, without any consideration of the understanding in a practical manner by counselling, commanding, &c.

2. A *practical* knowledge which tends to operation and practice, and is the principle of working about things that are known; as the knowledge an artificer hath in an art or mystery. This knowledge is in God: the knowledge he hath of the things he hath decreed, is such a kind of knowledge; for it terminates in the act of creation, which is not a natural and necessary act, as the loving himself, and delighting in himself is, but wholly free: for it was at his liberty whether he would create them or no; this is called discretion, *Jer.* 10. 12. *He hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.* Such also is his knowledge of the things he hath created, and which are in being, for it terminates in the government of them for his own glorious ends. It is by this knowledge *the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down their dew, Pro.* 3. 20. This is a knowledge whereby he knows the essence, qualities, and properties of what he creates and governs in order to his own glory, and the common good of the world over which he presides; so that *speculative* knowledge is God's knowledge of himself and things possible, *practical* knowledge is his knowledge of his creatures and things governable; yet in some sort this practical knowledge is not only of things that are made, but of things which are possible, which God might make, though he will not: for as he knows that they can be created, so he knows how they are to be created, and how to be governed, though he never will create them. This is a practical knowledge: for it is not requisite to constitute a knowledge practically, actu-

ally to act, but that the knowledge in itself be referable to action. *

3. There is a knowledge *of approbation*, as well as apprehension. This the scripture often mentions: words of understanding are used to signify the acts of affection. This knowledge adds to the simple act of the understanding, the complacency and pleasure of the will; and is improperly knowledge because it belongs to the will, and not to the understanding; only it is radically in the understanding, because affection implies knowledge; men cannot approve of that which they are ignorant of. Thus knowledge is taken, *Amos* 3. 2, *You only have I known of all the families of the earth.* And 2 *Tim.* 2. 19. *The Lord knows who are his*, that is, he loves them, he doth not only know them but acknowledges them for his own: it notes not only an exact understanding, but a special care of them; and so is that passage to be understood, *God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good:* That is, he saw it with an eye of approbation, as well as apprehension. This is grounded upon God's knowledge of vision, his sight of his creatures; for God does not love or delight in any thing but what is actually in being, or what he hath decreed to bring into being, on the contrary also, when God does not approve, he is said not to know, *Mat.* 25. 12, *I know you not:* And *Mat.* 7. 23, *I never knew you:* He does not approve of their works: it is not an ignorance of understanding, but an ignorance of will; for while he saith he never knew them, he testifies that he did know them, in rendering the reason of his disapproving them, because he knows all their works: so he knows them, and does not know them, in a different manner: he knows them so as to understand them; but he does not know them so as to love them.

We must then ascribe an *universal* knowledge to God. If we deny him a speculative knowledge, or knowledge of intelligence, we destroy his Deity, we make him ignorant of his own power: if we deny him practical knowledge, we deny ourselves to be his creatures: for as his

* Suarez de Deo l. 3. c. 4. p. 140.

creatures, we are the fruits of this his discretion discovered in creation: if we deny his knowledge of vision, we deny his governing dominion. How can he exercise a sovereign and uncontroulable dominion, that is ignorant of the nature and qualities of the things he is to govern? if he had not knowledge he could make no revelation; he that knows not, cannot dictate; we could then have no scripture. To deny God knowledge is to obliterate the scripture, and demolish the Deity.

God is described in *Zech.* 3. 9, *with seven eyes,* to shew his perfect knowledge of all things, all occurrences in the world; and the *cherubim,* or whatsoever is meant by the *wings,* are described to be *full of eyes,* both *before and behind,* round about them; much more is God all eye, all ear, all understanding, *Ezek.* 1. 18. The sun is a natural image of God; if the sun had an eye, it would see; if it had an understanding, it would know all visible things; it would see what it shines upon, and understand what it influenceth in the most obscure bowels of the earth. Doth God excel his creature the sun in excellency and beauty, and not in light and understanding? Certainly, more than the sun excels an atom or grain of dust.

We may yet make some representation of this knowledge of God by a lower thing, a picture, which seems to look upon every one, though there be never so great a multitude in the room where it hangs; no man can cast his eye upon it, but it seems to behold him in particular, and so exactly as if there were none but him, upon whom the eye of it were fixed; and every man finds the same cast of it; shall art frame a thing of that nature, and shall not the God of art and all knowledge be much more in reality than that is in imagination? Shall not God have a far greater capacity to behold every thing in the world which is infinitely less to him than a wide room to a picture?

PART II.

THE EXTENT OF JEHOVAH'S KNOWLEDGE.

God only knows himself—Otherwise he could not be perfect—He could not be blessed—Could create nothing—God knows his own essence—Perfectly—Knows all things—Possible—Past—Present—Knows all creatures—Their actions—Thoughts—Notions of mind and will—He knows all sin—Things future known to him.

GOD knows *himself*, and only knows himself. This is the first and original knowledge, wherein he excels all creatures. No man exactly knows himself; much less does he understand the full nature of a spirit; and much less still the nature and perfections of God; for what proportion can there be between a finite faculty and an infinite object? Herein consists the infinity of God's knowledge, that he knows his own essence, that he knows that which is unknowable to any else. It does not so much consist in knowing the creature which he hath made, as in knowing himself who was never made. It is not so much infinite, because he knows all things which are in the world, or that shall be; or things that he can make, because the number of them is finite; but because he hath a perfect and comprehensive knowledge of his own infinite perfections. * Though it be said that angels *see his face*, *Matt.* 18. 10, that sight notes rather their immediate attendance, than their exact knowledge; they see some signs of his presence and majesty, more illus-

* Moulin.

trious and express than ever appeared to man in this life; but the essence of God is invisible to them, hid from them in the secret place of eternity; none knows God but himself, 1 *Cor.* 2. 11, *What man knows the things of a man save the spirit of a man? So the things of God knows no man but the spirit of God; the spirit of God searches the deep things of God;* searcheth, that is, exactly knows, thoroughly understands, as those who have their eyes in every chink and crevice to see what lies hid there: the word *search*, denotes not an enquiry, but an exact knowledge, such as men have of things upon a diligent scrutiny; as when God is said to search the heart and the reins, it doth not signify a precedent ignorance, but an exact knowledge of the most intimate corners of the hearts of men. As the conceptions of men are unknown to any but themselves; so the depths of the divine essence, perfections, and decrees are unknown to any but to God himself; he only knows what he is, and what he knows, what he can do, and what he hath decreed to do.

For first, if God did not know himself, *he would not be perfect.* It is the perfection of a creature to know itself, much more a perfection belonging to God. If God did not comprehend himself, he would want an infinite perfection, and so would cease to be God, in being defective in that which intellectual creatures in some measure possess. As God is the most perfect being, so he must have the most perfect understanding: if he did not understand himself, he would be under the greatest ignorance, because he would be ignorant of the most excellent object. Ignorance is the imperfection of the understanding; and ignorance of one's self is a greater imperfection than ignorance of things without. If God should know all things without himself, and not know himself, he would not have the most perfect knowledge, because he would not have the knowledge of the best of objects.

Without the knowledge of himself, *he could not be blessed.* Nothing can have any complacency in itself, without the knowledge of itself. Nothing can in a rational manner enjoy itself, without understanding itself.

The blessedness of God consists not in the knowledge of any thing without him, but in the knowledge of himself and his own excellency, as the principle of all things. If, therefore, he did not perfectly know himself and his own happiness, he could not enjoy a happiness; for to be, and not to know to be, is as if a thing were not. *He is God blessed for ever*, *Rom.* 9. 5. and therefore for ever had a knowledge of himself.

Without the knowledge of himself *he could create nothing*. For he would be ignorant of his own power, and his own ability; and he that doth not know how far his power extends, could not act. If he did not know himself, he could know nothing; and he that knows nothing, can do nothing; he could not know an effect to be possible to him, unless he knew his own power as a cause.

Without the knowledge of himself, *he could govern nothing*. He could not without the knowledge of his own holiness and righteousness, prescribe laws to men, nor without a knowledge of his own nature, order himself a manner of worship suitable to it.

All worship must be congruous to the dignity and nature of the object worshipped; he must therefore know his own authority whereby worship was to be enacted, his own excellency to which worship was to be suited, his own glory to which worship was to be directed. If he did not know himself, he did not know what to punish, because he would not know what was contrary to himself: not knowing himself, he would not know what was a contempt of him, and what an adoration of him; what was worthy of God, and what was unworthy of him. In fine, he could not know other things, unless he knew himself; unless he knew his own power, he could not know how he created things; unless he knew his own wisdom, he could not know the beauty of his works; unless he knew his own glory, he could not know the end of his works; unless he knew his own holiness, he could not know what was evil; and unless he knew his own justice, he could not know how to punish the crimes of his offending creatures. And therefore,

God knows himself, because his knowledge with his

will *is the cause of all other things* that can fall under his cognizance. He knows himself first, before he can know any other thing; that is, first according to our conceptions; for indeed God knows himself and all other things at once; he is the first truth, and therefore is the first object of his own understanding. There is nothing more excellent than himself, and therefore nothing more known to him than himself. As he is all knowledge, so he hath in himself the most excellent object of knowledge. To understand is properly to know one's self. No object is so intelligible to God as God is to himself, nor so intimately and immediately joined with his understanding as himself; for his understanding is his essence, himself.

He knows himself by *his own essence.* He knows not himself and his own power by the effect, because he knows himself from eternity, before there was a world, or any effect of his power extant. It is not a knowledge by the cause, for God hath no cause; nor a knowledge of himself by any species or any thing from without. If it were any thing from without himself, that must be created or uncreated; if uncreated, it would be God; and so we must either own many Gods, or own it to be his essence, and so not distinct from himself: if created, then his knowledge of himself would depend upon a creature; he could not then know himself from eternity, but in time, because nothing can be created from eternity, but in time. God knows not himself by any faculty, for there is no composition in God, he is not made up of parts, but is a simple being; some therefore have called God, not *intellectus*, understanding, because that savours of a faculty; but *intellectio*, intellection. God is all act in the knowledge of himself, and his knowledge of other things.

God therefore knows himself *perfectly*, comprehensively. Nothing in his own nature is concealed from him, he reflects upon every thing that he is. * There is a positive comprehension, so God doth not comprehend himself; for what is comprehended hath bounds; and what is comprehended by itself, is finite to itself: and there is a negative comprehension, God so comprehends

* Magalaneus.

himself; nothing in his own nature is obscure to him, unknown by him. For there is as great a perfection in the understanding of God to know, as there is in the divine nature to be known. The understanding of God, and the nature of God, are both infinite, and so equal to one another; his understanding is equal to himself; he knows himself so well, that nothing can be known by him more perfectly than himself is known to himself. He knows himself in the highest manner, because nothing is so proportioned to the understanding of God as himself. He knows his own essence, goodness, power, all his perfections, decrees, intentions, acts, the infinite capacity of his own understanding, so that nothing of himself is in the dark to himself. And in this respect some use this expression, that the infiniteness of God is in a manner finite to himself, because it is comprehended by himself.

Thus God transcends all creatures; thus his understanding is truly infinite, because nothing but himself is an infinite object for it. What angels may understand of themselves perfectly, I know not; but no creature in the world understands himself: man understands not fully the excellency and parts of his own nature. Upon God's knowledge of himself depends the comfort of his people, and the terror of the wicked; this is also a clear argument for his knowledge of all other things, without himself; he that knows himself, must needs know all other things less than himself, and which were made by himself. When the knowledge of his own immensity and infinity is not an object too difficult for him; the knowledge of a finite and limited creature in all his actions, thoughts, circumstances, cannot be too hard for him. Since he knows himself who is infinite, he cannot but know whatsoever is finite, this is the foundation of all his other knowledge; the knowledge of every thing present, past, and to come, is far less than the knowledge of himself. He is more incomprehensible in his own nature, than all things created, or that can be created, put together can be: if he then have a perfect comprehensive knowledge of his own nature, any know-

ledge of all other things is less than the knowledge of himself; this ought to be well considered by us, as the fountain whence all his other knowledge flows.

2. Therefore God knows all other things, whether they be *possible*, *past*, *present*, or *future*. Whether they be things that he can do, but will never do; or whether they be things that he hath done, but are not now; things that are now in being, or things that are not now existing, that lie in the womb of their proper and immediate causes; * if his understanding be infinite, he then knows all things whatsoever that can be known, else his understanding would have bounds, and what hath limits is not infinite, but finite; if he be ignorant of any one thing that is knowable, that is a bound to him, it comes with an exception, a *but*, God knows all things *but* this, a bar is then set to his knowledge. If there were any thing, any particular circumstance in the whole creation, or non-creation, and possible to be known by him, and yet were unknown to him, he could not be said to be omniscient. As he would not be almighty, if any one thing that implied not a repugnancy to his nature, did transcend his power.

First, he knows all things *possible*. No question but God knows what he could create, as well as what he hath created; what he would not create, as well as what he resolved to create; he knew what he would not do, before he willed to do it; this is the next thing which declares the infinity of his understanding; for as his power is infinite, and can create innumerable worlds and creatures; so is his knowledge infinite, in knowing innumerable things possible to his power. Possibles are infinite; that is, there is no end of what God can do, and therefore no end of what he knows; otherwise his power would be more infinite than his knowledge. If he knew only what is created, there would be an end of his understanding, because all creatures may be numbered, but possible things cannot be reckoned up by any creature. There is the same reason of this in eternity;

* Petav. Theol. Dogm. lib. q. 257.

when never so many numbers of years are run out, there is still more to come, there still wants an end; and when millions of worlds are created, there is no more an end of God's power, than of eternity. Thus there is no end of his understanding; that is, his knowledge is not terminated by any thing.

This the scripture gives us some account of; God knows things that are not, *for he calls things that are not, as if they were, Rom.* 4. 17. He calls things that are not, as if they were in being; what he calls is not unknown to him. If he knows things that are not, he knows things that may never be: as he knows things that shall be, because he wills them; so he knows things that might be, because he is able to effect them. He knew that the inhabitants of Kelah would betray David to Saul, if he remained in that place, 1 *Sam.* 23. 11. He knew what they would do upon that occasion, though it was never done; as he knew what was in their power and in their wills, so he must needs know what is within the compass of his own power. As he can permit more than he doth permit; so he knows what he can permit, and what upon that permission would be done by his creatures; so God knew the possibility of the Tyrians' repentance, if they had the same means, heard the same truths, and beheld the same miracles which were offered to the ears, and presented to the eyes of the Jews, *Matt.* 11. 21.

This must needs be so, because,

Man knows things that are possible to him, though he will *never effect* them. A carpenter knows a house in the model he hath of it in his head, though he never built a house according to that model; a watch maker hath the frame of a watch in his mind, which he will never work with his instruments; man knows what he could do, though he never intends to do it.* As the understanding of man hath a virtue, that where it sees one man, it may imagine thousands of men of the same shape, stature, form, parts; yet taller, more vigorous,

* Ficin de immort lib. 2. cap. 10.

sprightly, intelligent than the man he sees; because it is possible such a member may be; shall not the understanding of God much more know what he is able to effect, since the understanding of man can know what he is never able to produce, yet may be produced by God, viz. that he who produced this man which I see, can produce a thousand exactly like him? If the divine understanding did not know infinite things, but were confined to a certain number; it may be demanded whether God can understand any thing farther than that number, or whether he cannot? If he can, then he actually understands all those things which he hath a power to understand; otherwise there would be an increase of God's knowledge, if it were actually now, and not before, and so he would be more perfect than he was before: if he cannot understand them, then he cannot understand what a human mind can understand; for our understandings can multiply numbers *in infinitum;* and there is no number so great, but a man can still add to it; we must suppose the divine understanding more excellent in knowledge. God knows all that a man can imagine, though it never were, nor never shall be; he must needs know whatsoever is in the power of man to imagine or think, because God concurs to the support of the faculty in that imagination, and though it may be replied, an atheist may imagine that there is no God; a man may imagine that God can lie, or that he can be destroyed; doth God know therefore that he is not? Or that he can lie, or cease to be? No, he knows he cannot; his knowledge extends to things possible, not to things impossible to himself; he knows it as imaginable by man, not as possible in itself; because it is utterly impossible, and repugnant to the nature of God;* since he eminently contains in himself all things possible, past, present, and to come; he cannot know himself without knowing them.

God knowing his own power, *knows whatsoever is in his power to effect.* If he knows not all things possible,

* Gamach.

he could not know the extent of his own power, and so would not know himself, as a cause sufficient for more things than he hath created; how can he comprehend himself, who comprehends not all effluxes of things possible that may come from him and be wrought by him? How can he know himself as a cause, if he know not the objects and works which he is able to produce?* Since the power of God extends to numberless things, his knowledge also extends to numberless objects; as if a unit could see the numbers it could produce, it would see infinite numbers; for a unit is, as it were, all number. God knowing the fruitfulness of his own virtue, knows a numberless multitude of things which he can do, more than have been done, or shall be done by him; he therefore knows innumerable worlds, innumerable angels, with higher perfections than any of them which he hath created have. So that if the world should last many millions of years, God knows that he can every day create another world more capacious than this; and having created an unconceivable number, he knows he could still create more: so that he beholds infinite worlds, infinite numbers of men, and other creatures, in himself, infinite kinds of things, infinite species and individuals, under those kinds, even as many as he can create, if his will did order and determine it; for not being ignorant of his own power, he cannot be ignorant of the effects wherein it may display and discover itself. A comprehensive knowledge of his own power necessarily includes the objects of that power; so he knows whatsoever he could effect, and whatsoever he could permit, if he pleased to do it.

If God could not understand more than he hath created, he could not create more than he hath created: for it cannot be conceived how he can create any thing that he is ignorant of; what he doth not know, he cannot do. He must know also the extent of his own goodness, and how far any thing is capable to partake of it: so much therefore as any detract from the knowledge of God, they detract from his power.

* Ficin de immort. lib. 2. cap. 10.

It is further evident that God knows all possible things, because *he knew those things which he has created before they were created*, when they were yet in a possibility. If God knew things before they were created, he knew them when they were in a possibility, and not in actual reality. It is absurd to imagine that his understanding went after the creatures, to draw knowledge from them after they were created. It is absurd to think that God created before he knew what he could or would create. If he knew the things he created when they were possible, he must know all things which he can create, and therefore all things that are possible.

To conclude this: We must consider that this knowledge is of another kind than his knowledge of things that are or shall be. He sees possible things as possible, not as things that ever are or shall be. If he saw them as existing or future, and they shall never be, this knowledge would be false, there would be a deceit in it, which cannot be. He knows those things not in themselves, because they are not, nor in their causes, because they shall never be: he knows them in his own power, not in his will: he understands them as able to produce them, not as willing to effect them. Things possible he knows only in his power, things future he knows both in his power and his will, as he is both able and determined in his own good pleasure to give being to them. Those that shall never come to pass, he knows only in himself, as a sufficient cause; those things that shall come into being, he knows in himself as the efficient cause, and also in their immediate second causes. This should teach us to spend our thoughts in the admirations of the excellency of God, and the divine knowledge; his understanding is infinite.

2. God knows all things *past*. This is an argument used by God himself to elevate his excellency above all the commonly adored idols, *Isa.* 41. 22, *Let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them and know the latter end of them.* He knows them as if they were now present, and not past: for indeed

in his eternity there is nothing past or future to his knowledge. This is called remembrance in scripture, as when God remembered Rachel's prayer for a child, *Gen.* 30. 22, and he is said to put *tears* into his *bottle*, and *write* them *in his book* of accounts, which signifies the exact and unerring knowledge in God of the minute circumstances past in the world; and this knowledge is called a *book of remembrance*, *Mal.* 3. 16, signifying the perpetual presence of things past, before him. There are two elegant expressions signifying the certainty and perpetuity of God's knowledge of sins past, *Job* 14. 17, *My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and thou sewest up my iniquity.* A metaphor taken from men that put up in a bag the money they would carefully keep, tie the bag, sew up the holes, and bind it hard that nothing may fall out; or a vessel wherein they reserve liquors, and daub it with pitch and glutinous stuff, that nothing may leak out, but be safely kept till the time of use. Or else, as some think, from the bags attorneys carry with them, full of writings, when they are to manage a cause against a person. Thus we find God often in scripture calling to men's minds their past actions, upbraiding them with their ingratitude, wherein he testifies his remembrance of his own past benefits, and their crimes. His knowledge in this regard hath something of infinity in it, since though the sins of all men that have been in the world are finite in regard of number, yet when the sins of one man in thoughts, words, and deeds, are numberless in his own account, and perhaps in the account of any creature, the sins of all the vast numbers of men that have been, or shall be, are much more numberless, it cannot be less than infinite knowledge that can make a collection of them, and take a survey of them all at once.

If past things had not been known by God, how could Moses have been acquainted with the original of things? How could he have declared the former transactions, wherein all histories are silent but the scripture? How could he know the cause of man's present misery so many

ages after, wherewith all philosophy was unacquainted? How could he have writ the order of the creation, the particulars of the sin of Adam, the circumstances of Cain's murder, the private speech of Lamech to his wives, if God had not revealed them? And how could a revelation be made, if things past were forgotten by him? Do we not remember many things done among men as well as by ourselves, and reserve the forms of divers things in our minds, which rise as occasions are presented to draw them forth? And shall not God much more, who hath no cloud of darkness upon his understanding? A man that makes a curious picture, hath the form of it in his mind before he made it; and if the fire burn it, the form of it in his mind is not destroyed by the fire, but retained in it. God's memory is no less perfect than his understanding: if he did not know things past, he could not be a righteous Governor, or exercise any judicial act in a righteous manner; he could not dispense rewards and punishments according to his promises and threatenings, if things that were past could be forgotten by him; he could not *require* that which *is past*, if he did not remember that which is past, *Eccles.* 3. 15.

And though God be said to *forget* in Scripture, and *not to know* his people, and his people pray to him to *remember them*, as if he had *forgotten them*; this is improperly ascribed to God. As God is said to repent, when he changes things according to his counsel beyond the expectation of men; so he is said to forget, when he defers the making good his promise to the godly, or his threatenings to the wicked; this is not a defect of memory belonging to his mind, but an act of his will. When he is said to remember his covenant, it is to will and communicate grace according to his covenant; when he is said to forget his covenant, it is to intercept the influences of it, whereby to punish the sin of his people; and when he is said not to know his people, it is not an absolute forgetfulness of them, but withdrawing from them the testimonies of his kindness, and clouding the signs of his favour: so God in pardoning is said to forget sin, not that he ceaseth to

know it, but ceaseth to punish it. It is not to be meant of a simple forgetfulness, or a lapse of his memory, but of a judicial forgetfulness; so when his people in scripture pray, *Lord, remember thy word unto thy servant;* no more is to be understood, but Lord, fulfil thy word and promise to thy servant.

3. He knows things *present*, *Heb.* 4. 13, *All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.* This is grounded upon the knowledge of himself; it is not so difficult to know all creatures exactly as to know himself, because they are finite, but himself is infinite; he knows his own power, and therefore every thing through which his omnipotence is diffused, all the acts and objects of it; not the least thing that is the birth of his power, can be concealed from him; he knows his own goodness, and therefore every object upon which the warm beams of his goodness strike; he therefore knows distinctly the properties of every creature, because every property in them is a ray of his goodness; he is not only the efficient, but the exemplary cause; therefore as he knows all that his power hath wrought, as he is the efficient, so he knows them in himself as the pattern; as a carpenter can give an account of every part and passage in a house he hath built, by consulting the model in his own mind, whereby he built it. *He looked upon all things after he had made them, and pronounced them good,* full of a natural goodness he had endowed them with; he did not ignorantly pronounce them so, and call them good, whether he knew them or not; and therefore he knows them in particular, as he knew them all in their first presence.

Is there any reason he should be ignorant of every thing now present in the world, or that any thing that derives an existence from him as a free cause, should be concealed from him? If he did not know things present in their particularities, many things would be known by man, yea, by beasts, which the infinite God were ignorant of; and if he did not know all things present, but only some; it is possible for the most blessed God to be deceived and be miserable. Ignorance is a calamity to

the understanding. He could not prescribe laws to his creatures, unless he knew their natures, to which those laws were to be suited; no, not natural ordinances to the sun, moon, and heavenly bodies, and inanimate creatures, unless he knew the vigour and virtue in them to execute those ordinances; for to prescribe laws above the nature of things, is inconsistent with the wisdom of his government; he must know how far they were able to obey; whether the laws were suited to their ability; and for his rational creatures, whether the punishments annexed to the law were proper, and suited to the transgressions of the creature.

He knows *all creatures* from the highest to the lowest, the least as well as the greatest. He knows the *ravens and their young ones; the drops of rain and dew which he hath begotten: He knows all the fowls in the mountains, and the wild beasts in the field;* which some read creeping things. *The clouds are numbered in his wisdom, Job* 38. 37. Every worm in the earth, every drop of rain that falls upon the ground, the flakes of snow, and the knots of hail, the sands upon the sea-shore, the hairs upon the head, it is no more absurd to imagine that God knows them, than that God made them; they are all the effects of his power, as well as the stars, which he calls by their names, as well as the most glorious angel and blessed spirit; he knows them as well as if there were none but them in particular for him to know; the least things were framed by his art as well as the greatest; the least things partake of his goodness as well as the greatest; he knows his own arts, and his own goodness, and therefore all the stamps and impressions of them upon all his creatures; he knows the immediate causes of the least, and therefore the effects of those causes. Since his knowledge is infinite, it must extend to those things which are at the greatest distance from him, to those which approach nearest to not being; since he did not want power to create, he cannot want understanding to know every thing he hath created, the dispositions, qualities, and virtues of the minutest creature.

Nor is the understanding of God debased, by the

knowledge of the vilest and most inconsiderable things. Is it not an imperfection to be ignorant of the nature of any thing? And can God have such a defect in his most perfect understanding? Is the understanding of man of an impurer alloy by knowing the nature of the rankest poisons; by understanding a fly, or a small insect; or by considering the deformity of a toad? Is it not generally counted a note of a dignified mind, to be able to discourse of the nature of them? Was Solomon, who knew all from the *cedar* to the *hyssop*, debased by so rich a present of wisdom from his Creator? Is any glass defiled by presenting a deformed image? Is there any thing more vile than the *imaginations, which are only evil, and that continually?* Doth not the mind of man descend to the mud of the earth, play the adulterer or idolater with mean objects, suck in the most unclean things? yet God knows these in all their circumstances, in every appearance, inside and outside. Is there any thing viler than some thoughts of men? than some actions of men? their uncleanness, brutal intemperance, and Luciferian pride? yet do not these fall under the eye of God, in all their nakedness?

The second person's taking human nature, though it obscured, yet it did not disparage the Deity; or bring any disgrace to it: is gold the worse for being formed into the image of a fly? Doth it not still retain the nobleness of the metal? When men are despised for descending to the knowledge of mean and vile things, it is because they neglect the knowledge of the greater, and sin in their enquiries after lesser things, with a neglect of that which concerns more the honour of God and the happiness of themselves; to be ambitious of such a knowledge, and careless of that of more concern, is criminal and contemptible. But God knows the greatest as well as the least: mean things are not known by him to exclude the knowledge of the greater; nor are vile things governed by him to exclude the order of the better. The deformity of objects known by God doth not deform him, nor defile him; he doth not view them without himself, but within himself, wherein all things in their ideas are

beautiful and comely. Our knowledge of a deformed thing, is not a deforming of our understanding, but is beautiful in the knowledge, though it be not in the object; nor is there any fear that the understanding of God should become material by knowing material things, any more than our understandings lose their spirituality by knowing the nature of bodies; it is to be observed therefore that only those senses of men; as seeing, hearing, smelling, which have those qualities for their objects that come nearest the nature of spiritual things, as light, sounds, fragrant odours, are ascribed to God in scripture; not touching or tasting, which are senses that are not exercised without a more immediate commerce with gross matter; and the reason may be, because we should have no gross thoughts of God, as if he were a body, and made of matter, like the things he knows.

As he knows all creatures, so *God knows all the actions of creatures.* He counts in particular all the ways of men. *Doth he not see all my ways, and count all my steps? Job.* 31. 4. He *tells their wanderings, Psal.* 56. 8. *His eyes are upon all the ways of man, and he sees all his goings, Job* 34. 21, a metaphor taken from men, when they look with fixed eyes upon a thing, to view it in every circumstance, whence it comes, whither it goes, to observe every little motion of it. God's eye is not a wandering but a fixed eye; and the ways of man are not only *before his eyes,* but he exactly *ponders them, Prov.* 5. 21; as one that will not be ignorant of the least mite in them, but weigh and examine them by the standard of his law; he may as well know the motions of our members, as the hairs of our heads; the smallest actions before they be, whether civil, natural, or religious, fall under his cognizance; what meaner than a man carrying a pitcher, yet our Saviour foretels it? *Luke* 22. 10. God knows not only what men do, but what they would have done, had he not restrained them; what Abimelech would have done to Sarah, had not God put a bar in his way, *Gen.* 20. 6. What a man, that is taken away in his youth, would have done, had he lived to a riper age; yea, he knows the most secret words as well as actions; the

words spoken by the king of Israel in his bedchamber were revealed to Elisha, 2 *Kings* 6. 12, and indeed how can any action of man be concealed from God? Can we view the various actions of a heap of ants, or a hive of bees, in a glass, without turning our eyes; and shall not God behold the actions of all men in the world, which are less than bees and ants in his sight, and more visible to him than an ant-hill or bee-hive can be to the acutest eye of man?

As God knows all the actions of creatures, so he knows *all the thoughts* of creatures. The thoughts are the most closeted acts of man, hid from men and angels, unless disclosed by some outward expressions; but God descends into the depths and abysses of the soul, discerns the most inward contrivances; nothing is impenetrable to him; the sun doth not so much enlighten the earth, as God understands the heart; all thoughts are as visible to him as flies and motes enclosed in a body of transparent chrystal; this man naturally allows to God. Men often speak to God by the motions of their minds and secret ejaculations; which they would not do, if it were not naturally implanted in them, that God knows all their inward motions; the scripture is plain and positive in this, *He tries the heart and the reins*, as men by the use of fire discern the drossy and purer parts of metal. The secret intentions and aims, the most lurking affections seated in the reins; he knows that which no man, no angel is able to know; which a man himself knows not, nor makes any particular reflection upon; yea, *he weighs the spirit*, he exactly numbers all the devices and inclinations of men, as men do every piece of coin they tell out of a heap.

He discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart, all that is in the mind, all that is in the affections, every stirring and purpose; so that not one *thought* can be withheld *from him*, yea, *hell and destruction are before him, much more then the hearts of the children of men*, *Prov.* 15. 11. He works all things in the bowels of the earth, and brings forth all things out of that treasure, say some: but more naturally, God knows the whole state of

the dead, all the receptacles and graves of their bodies, all the bodies of men consumed by the earth, or devoured by living creatures; things that seem to be out of all being; he knows the thoughts of the devils and damned creatures, whom he hath cast out of his care for ever, into the arms of his justice, never more to cast a delightful glance towards them; not a secret in any soul in hell is hid from him; much more is he acquainted with the thoughts of living men, the counsels of whose hearts are yet to be manifested, in order to their trial and censure; yea, he knows them before they spring up into actual being, *Psa.* 139. 2, *Thou understandest my thoughts afar off;* my thoughts, that is, every thought; though innumerable thoughts pass through me in a day, and that in the source and fountain, before it is our thought; if he knows them before their existence, before they can be properly called ours, much more doth he know them when they actually spring up in us; he knows the tendency of them, where the bird will light when it is in flight; he knows them exactly, he is therefore called a *discerner* or criticiser of the heart, *Heb.* 4. 12. As a critic discerns every letter, point, and stop; he is more intimate with us than our souls with our bodies, and hath more the possession of us than we have of ourselves; he knows them by an inspection into the heart, not by the mediation of second causes, by the looks or gestures of men, as men may discern the thoughts of one another.

God discerns all *good motions* of the mind and will. These he puts into men, and needs must God know his own act; he knew *the son of Jeroboam to have some good thing in him towards the Lord God of Israel,* 1 *Kings* 14. 13. and the integrity of David and Hezekiah; the freest motions of the will and affections to him. *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee,* saith Peter, *John* 21. 17. Love can no more be restrained, than the will itself can. A man may make another to grieve and desire, but none can force another to love.

God discerns *all the evil motions* of the mind and will. *Every imagination of the heart,* the vanity of men's thoughts, their inward darkness, and deceitful disguises:

no wonder that God who fashioned the heart, should understand the motions of it. *He looks from heaven, and beholds all the children of men: he fashioneth their hearts alike, and considers all their works.* Doth any man make a watch, and yet be ignorant of its motion? Did God fling away the key to this secret cabinet, when he framed it, and put off the power of unlocking it when he pleased? He did not surely frame it in such a posture as that any thing in it should be hid from his eye; he did not fashion it to be privileged from his government; which would follow, if he were ignorant of what was minted and coined in it.

He could not be a judge to punish men, if the inward frames and principles of men's actions were concealed from him; an outward action may glitter to an outward eye, yet the secret spring be a desire of applause, and not the fear and love of God. If the inward frames of the heart lay covered from him in the secret recesses of the heart, those plausible acts, which in regard of their principles would merit punishment, would meet with reward; and God should bestow happiness where he had denounced misery. As without the knowledge of what is just, he could not be a wise law-giver; so without the knowledge of what is inwardly committed, he could not be a righteous judge; acts that are unsound in the spring, might be judged good by the fair colour and appearance.

This is the glory of God at the last day, *to manifest the secrets of all hearts*, and the prophet Jeremiah links the power of judging, and the prerogative of trying the hearts together, Jer. 11. 20. and 17. 10, *But thou, O Lord of Hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart. I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins;* to what end? even *to give every man according to his way, and according to the fruit of his doings.* And indeed his binding up the whole law with that command of not coveting, evidences that he will judge men by the inward affections and frames of their hearts. Again, God sustains the mind of man in every act of thinking; in him we have not only the principle of life; but every motion, the motion of our minds as well as of our members; *In him we*

live and move. Since he supports the vigour of the faculty in every act, can he be ignorant of those acts which spring from the faculty, to which he at that instant communicates power and ability?

Now this knowledge of the thoughts of men is an *incommunicable property, belonging only to the divine understanding.* Creatures indeed may know the thoughts of others by divine revelation, but not by themselves; no creature hath a key immediately to open the minds of men, and see all that lodges there; no creature can fathom the heart by the line of created knowledge*. Devils may have a conjectural knowledge, and may guess at them, by the acquaintance they have with the disposition and constitution of men, and the images they behold in their fancies; and by some marks which an inward imagination may stamp upon the brain, blood, animal spirits, face, &c. But the knowing the thoughts merely as thoughts, without any impression by it, is a royalty God appropriates to himself, as the main secret of his government, and a perfection declarative of his Deity, as much as any else. *The heart of man is desperately wicked, who can know it?* Yes, there is one, and but one, *I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks upon the heart,* 1 *Sam.* 16. 7, where God is distinguished by this perfection from all men whatsoever; others may know by revelation, as Elisha did, what was in Gehazi's heart, 2 *Kings* 5. 26. But God knows a man more than any man knows himself. What person upon earth understands the windings and turnings of his own heart, what reserves it will have, what contrivances, what inclinations? all which God knows exactly.

God acquires no *new knowledge* of the thoughts and heart, *by the discovery of them in the actions.* He would then be but equal in this part of knowledge to his creature; no man or angel but may thus arrive to the knowledge of them: God were then excluded from an absolute dominion over the prime work of his lower creation;

* Daille Serm. part 1. p. 220.

he would have made a creature superior in this respect to himself, upon whose will to discover, his knowledge of their inward intentions should depend; and therefore when God is said to search the heart, we must not understand it as if God were ignorant before, and was fain to make an exact scrutiny and enquiry, before he attained what he desired to know; but God condescends to our capacity in the expression of his own knowledge, signifying that his knowledge is as complete as any man's knowledge can be, of the designs of others, after he hath sifted them by a strict and thorough examination, and wrung out a discovery of their intentions; that he knows them as perfectly as if he had put them upon the rack, and forced them to make a discovery of their secret plottings.

Nor must we understand, *Gen.* 22. 12, where God saith, after Abraham had stretched out his hand to sacrifice his son, *Now I know that thou fearest God*, as though God was ignorant of Abraham's gracious disposition to him: Did Abraham's drawing his knife, furnish God with a new knowledge? no, God knew Abraham's pious inclinations before, *Gen.* 18. 19, *I know him that he will command his children after him*, &c. Knowledge is sometimes taken for approbation; then the sense will be, now I approve this fact as a testimony of thy fear of me; since thy affection to thy Isaac is extinguished by the more powerful flame of affection to my will and command; I now accept thee, and count thee a meet subject of my choicest benefits; or *now I know*, that is, I have made known and manifested the faith of Abraham to himself and to the world: thus Paul uses the word *know*, 1 *Cor.* 2. 2, *I have determined to know nothing;* that is to declare and teach nothing, to make known nothing but Christ crucified; or else, *now I know*, that is, I have an evidence and experiment in this noble fact, that thou fearest me. God often condescends to our capacity in speaking of himself after the manner of men, as if he had, as men do, known the inward affections of others by their outward actions.

God knows *all the evils and sins of creatures.*

God knows *all sin.* This follows upon the other. If

he knows all the actions and thoughts of creatures, he knows also all the sinfulness in those acts and thoughts: this Zophar infers from God's punishing men, *Job* 11. 11, *for he knows vain man, he sees his wickedness also;* he knows every man, and sees the wickedness of every man: *he looks down from heaven*, and beholds not only the filthy persons, but what is filthy in them, all nations in the world, and every man of every nation, none of their iniquity is hid from his eyes; *he searches* Jerusalem *with candles, Jer.* 16. 17. God follows sinners step by step, with his eye; and will not leave searching out till he hath taken them; a metaphor taken from one that searches with a candle, that nothing can be hid from him. He knows it distinctly in all the parts of it, how an adulterer rises out of his bed to commit uncleanness, what contrivances he had, what steps he took, every circumstance in the whole progress; not only evil in the bulk, but every one of the blacker spots upon it, which may most aggravate it. If he did not know evil, how could he permit it, order it, punish it, or pardon it? Doth he permit he knows not what? Order to his own holy ends what he is ignorant of? Punish or pardon that which he is uncertain whether it be a crime or no? *Cleanse me*, saith David, *from my secret faults, Psa.* 19. 12, secret in regard of others, secret in regard of himself; how could God cleanse him from that whereof he was ignorant?

He knows sins before they are committed, much more when they are in act; he foreknew the idolatry and apostacy of the Jews; what gods they would serve, in what measure they would provoke him, and violate his covenant. *Deut.* 31. 20, 21. He knew Judas's sin long before his actual existence, foretelling it in the Psalms; and Christ predicts it before he committed it. He sees sins future in his own permitting will; he sees sins present in his own supporting act. As he knows things possible to himself, because he knows his own power, so he knows things practicable by the creature, because he knows the power and principles of the creature.* This sentiment of God is naturally written in the fears of sinners, upon lightning, thunder,

* Fotherby Atheoma, p. 132.

or some prodigious operation of God in the world; what is their language, but that he sees their deeds, hears their words, knows the inward sinfulness of their hearts; that he not only beholds them as a mere spectator, but considers them as a just judge. And the poets say, that the sins of men leapt into heaven and were written in parchments of Jupiter, † *scelus in terram geritur, in cælo scribitur: sin is acted on earth, and recorded in heaven.*

God indeed beholds not evil with an approving eye; he knows it not with a practical knowledge to be the author of it, but with a speculative knowledge, so as to understand the sinfulness of it; or a knowledge *simplicis intelligentiæ*, of simple intelligence, as he permits them, not positively wills them; he knows them not with a knowledge of assent to them, but dissent from them. Evil pertains to a dissenting act of the mind, and an aversive act of the will; and what though evil formally taken, hath no distinct conception, because it is a privation; a defect hath no being, and all knowledge is by the apprehension of some being; would not this lie as strongly against our own knowledge of sin? Sin is a privation of the rectitude due to an act; and who doubts man's knowledge of sin? By his knowing the act, he knows the deficiency of the act; the subject of evil hath a being, and so hath a conception in the mind; that which hath no being cannot be known by itself, or in itself, but will it follow that it cannot be known by its contrary? As we know darkness to be a privation of light, and folly to be a privation of wisdom. God knows all good by himself, because he is the sovereign good; is it strange then, that he should know all evil, since all evil is in some natural good?

The *manner* of God's knowing evil, is *not so easily known.* And indeed, as we cannot comprehend the essence of God, though it is easily intelligible that there is such a Being; so we can as little comprehend the manner of God's knowledge, though we cannot but conclude him to be an intelligent being, a pure understanding, knowing all things. As God hath a higher manner of being than his creatures, so he hath another and higher manner of

* Ἐν Διοχείλτ Cross. Anthol. dec. 1. cap. 395. p. 101.

knowing; and we can as little comprehend the manner of his knowing, as we can the manner of his being. But as to the manner,

Doth not God know his own law, and shall he not know how much any action comes short of his rule? He cannot know his own rule without knowing all the deviations from it. He knows his own holiness, and shall he not see how any action is contrary to the holiness of his own nature? Doth not God know every thing that is true? And is it not true that this or that is evil? and shall God be ignorant of any truth? How doth God know that he cannot lie, but by knowing his own veracity? How doth God know that he cannot die, but by knowing his own immutability? and by knowing those, he knows what a lie is, he knows what death is; so if sin never had been, if no creature had ever been, God would have known what sin was, because he knows his own holiness; because he knew what law was fit to be appointed to his creatures if he should create them, and that that law might be transgressed by them. God knows all good, all goodness in himself; he therefore hath a foundation in himself to know all that comes short of that goodness, that is opposite to that holiness. As if light were capable of understanding, it would know darkness only by knowing itself; by knowing itself, it would know what is contrary to itself. God knows all created goodness which he hath planted in the creature; he knows then all defects from this goodness, what perfection an act is deprived of; what is opposite to that goodness, and that is evil. As we know sickness by health, discord by harmony, blindness by sight, because it is a privation of sight; whosoever knows one contrary knows the other; God knows unrighteousness by the idea which he hath of righteousness, and sees an act deprived of that rectitude and goodness which ought to be in it; he knows evil because he knows the causes whence evil proceeds * A painter knows a picture of his own framing, and if any one dashes any base colour upon it, shall not he also know that?

* Cusan. p. 245.

God by his hand painted all creatures, impressed upon man the fair stamp and colour of his own image; the devil defiles it, man daubs it. Doth not God, that knows his own work, know how this piece is become different from his work? Doth not God, that knows his creature's goodness, which himself was the fountain of, know the change of this goodness? Yea, he knew before that the devil would sow tares where he had sown wheat; and therefore that controversy of some in the schools, whether God knew evil by its opposition to created or uncreated goodness, is needless. We may say God knows sin as it is opposite to created goodness, yet he knows it radically by his own goodness, because he knows the goodness he hath communicated to the creature by his own essential goodness in himself. To conclude this head,

The knowledge of sin does not stain the holiness of God's nature; for the bare knowledge of a crime does not infect the mind of man with the filth and pollution of that crime; for then every man that knows an act of murder committed by another, would by that bare knowledge be tainted with his sin; yea, and a judge that condemns a malefactor, may as well condemn himself, if this were so. The knowledge of sins infects not the understanding that knows them, but only the will that approves them. It is no discredit to us to know evil, in order to pass a right judgment upon it; so neither can it be to God.

4. God knows all *future things*, all *things to come*. The differences of time cannot hinder a knowledge of all things by him, who is before time, above time, and is not measured by hours, or days, or years. If God did not know them, the hinderance must be in himself, or in the things themselves, because they are things to come. Not in himself; if it did, it must arise from some impotence in his own nature, and so we render him weak; or from an unwillingness to know, and so we render him lazy, and an enemy to his own perfection; for simply considered, the knowledge of more things is a greater perfection than the knowledge of a few; and if the know-

ledge of a thing includes something of perfection, the ignorance of a thing includes something of imperfection. The knowledge of future things is a greater perfection than not to know them, and is accounted among men a great part of wisdom, which they call foresight; it is then surely a greater perfection in God to know future things than to be ignorant of them. And would God rather have something of imperfection than be possessed of all perfection? Nor doth the hinderance lie in the things themselves, because their futurition depends upon his will; for as nothing can actually be without his will giving it existence, so nothing can be future without his will designing the futurity of it. Certainly if God knows all things possible, which he will not do, he must know all things future, which he is not only able but resolved to do, or resolved to permit. God's perfect knowledge of himself, that is, of his own infinite power and concluding will, necessarily includes a fore-knowledge of what he is able to do, and what he will do.

Again, if God doth not know future things, there was a time when God was ignorant of most things in the world; for before the deluge he was more ignorant than after; the more things were done in the world, the more knowledge did accrue to God, and so the more perfection; then the understanding of God was not perfect from eternity, but in time; nay it is not perfect yet, if he be ignorant of those things which are still to come to pass; he must tarry for a perfection he wants, till those futurities come to be in act, till those things which are to come, cease to be future, and begin to be present. Either God knows them or desires to know them; if he desires to know them and doth not, there is something wanting to him; all desire speaks an absence of the object desired, and a sentiment of want in the person desiring; if he doth not desire to know them, nay, if he doth not actually know them, it destroys all providence, all his government of affairs; for his providence hath a concatenation of means with a prospect of something that is future; as in Joseph's case, who was put into the pit, and sold to the Egyptians, in order to his future advancement, and

the preservation both of his father and his envious brethren. If God did not know all the future inclinations and actions of men, something might have been done by the will of Potiphar, or by the free will of Pharaoh, whereby Joseph might have been cut short of his advancement, and so God have been interrupted in the track and method of his designed providences. He that hath decreed to govern man for that end he hath designed him, knows all the means before, whereby he will govern him; and therefore hath a distinct and certain knowledge of all things; for a confused knowledge is an imperfection in government; it is in this the infinity of his understanding is more seen than in knowing things past or present; his eyes are as a *flame of fire, Rev.* 1. 14, in regard of the penetrating virtue of them into things impenetrable by any else.

PART III.

FURTHER EVIDENCE OF JEHOVAH'S KNOWLEDGE.

All the objects of his knowledge were ever future—Divine predictions prove this—God, knowing his own decrees, must know all things future—If not, he would be mutable in knowledge—His fore-knowledge from eternity—Incommunicable—Knows all future contingencies—The free and voluntary actions of men, good or evil—His foreknowledge does not necessitate his will—Is not the cause of any thing—Fore-knowledge of God, and liberty of man's will.

TO make it further appear that God knows *all things future*, consider, first, that every thing which is the object of God's knowledge *without himself*, was once only future. There was a moment when nothing was in

being but himself; he knew nothing actually past, because nothing was past; nothing actually present, because nothing had any existence but himself; therefore only what was future; and why not every thing that is future now, as well as only what was future and to come to pass just at the beginning of the creation? God indeed knows every thing as present, but the things themselves known by him were not present but future; the whole creation was once future, or else it was from eternity; if it begun in time, it was once future in itself, else it could never have begun to be; did not God know what would be created by him, before it was created by him?* Did he create he knew not what, and knew not before what he should create? Was he ignorant before he acted, and in his acting, what his operation would tend to? Or did he not know the nature of things, and the ends of them, till he had produced them, and saw them in being? Creatures then did not arise from his knowledge, but his knowledge from them; he did not then will that his creatures should be, or he had then willed what he knew not, and knew not what he willed; they therefore must be known before they were made, and not known because they were made; he knew them to make them, and he did not make them to know them. By the same reason he knew what creatures should be before they were, he knows still what creatures shall be before they are;† for all things that are, were in God, not really in their own nature, but in him as a cause; so the earth and heavens were in him as a model is in the mind of a workman, which is in his mind and soul before it be brought forth into outward act.

1. The *predictions* of future things evidence this. There is not a prophecy of any thing to come, but is a spark of his fore-knowledge, and bears witness to the truth of this assertion in the punctual accomplishment of it; this is a thing challenged by God, as his own peculiar prerogative, wherein he surmounts all the idols

* Petavius changed. † Bradward. lib. 3. cap. 14.

that man's inventions have deified in the world, *Isa.* 41. 21, 22, *Let them bring forth* (speaking of the idols,) *and shew us what shall happen, or declare us things to come: shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods.* Such a fore-knowledge of things to come is here ascribed to God by God himself, as a distinction of him from all false gods; such a knowledge, that if they could prove that they were possessors of, he would acknowledge them gods as well as himself; *that we may know that you are gods.* He puts his deity to stand or fall upon this account, and this should be the point which should decide the controversy, whether he or the heathen idols were the true God; the dispute is managed by this medium. He that knows things to come, is God; I know things to come, *ergo*, I am God; the idols know not things to come, therefore they are not gods. God submits the being of his deity to this trial. If God knows things to come no more than the heathen idols, which were either devils or men, he would be in his own account no more a God than devils or men; no more a God than the Pagan idols.

If the heathen idols were to be stripped of their deity for want of this fore-knowledge of things to come, would not the true God also fall from the same excellency, if he were defective in knowledge? He would in his own judgment no more deserve the title and character of a God than they. How could he reproach them for that, if it were wanting in himself? It cannot be understood of future things in their causes, when the effects necessarily arise from such causes, as light from the sun, and heat from the fire; many of these men know; more of them, angels and devils know; if God therefore had not a higher and farther knowledge than this, he would not by this be proved to be God, any more than angels and devils, who know necessary effects in their causes. The devils indeed did predict some things in the heathen oracles; but God is distinguished from them here by the infiniteness of his knowledge in being able to predict things to come that they knew not, or things in their

particularities, things that depended on the liberty of man's will, which the devils could lay no claim to a certain knowledge of.

Were it only a conjectural knowledge that is here meant, the devils might answer, they can conjecture, and so their deity were as good as God's; for though God might know more things, and conjecture nearer to what would be, yet still it would be but conjectural, and therefore not a higher kind of knowledge than what the devils might challenge. How much then is God beholden to the Socinians for denying the knowledge of all future things to him, upon which here he puts the trial of his Deity? God asserts his knowledge of things to come, as a manifest evidence of his Godhead; those that deny therefore the argument that proves it, deny the conclusion too; for this will necessarily follow, that if he be God because he knows future things, then he that doth not know future things is not God; and if God knows not future things but only by conjecture, then there is no God; because a certain knowledge so as infallibly to predict things to come, is an inseparable perfection of the Deity. It was therefore well said of Austin, that it was as high a madness to deny God to be, as to deny him the fore-knowledge of things to come.

The whole *prophetic* part of scripture declares this perfection of God; every prophet's candle was lighted at this torch, they could not have this fore-knowledge of themselves; why might not many other men have the same insight, if it were by nature.* It must be from some superior agent; and all nations owned prophecy as a beam from God, a fruit of divine illumination. Prophecy must be totally expunged if this be denied; for the subjects of prophecy are things future; and no man is properly a prophet, but in prediction; now prediction is nothing but foretelling, and things foretold are not yet come; and the foretelling of them supposeth them not to be yet, but that they shall be in time: several such predictions we have in scripture, the event whereof hath been certain. The years of famine in Egypt foretold

* Pacuvius said, Siqui quæ eventura sunt provident, æqui pari.

that he would order second causes for bringing that judgment upon them; the captivity of his people in Babylon, the calling of the Gentiles, the rejection of the Jews. Daniel's revelations of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, that prince refers to God as the revealer of secrets, *Dan.* 2. 47. By the same reason that he knows one thing future by himself, and by the infinity of his knowledge before any causes of them appear, he doth know all things future.

2. *Some future things are known by men,* and we must allow God a *greater knowledge than any creature.* Future things in their causes may be known by angels and men, as I said before; whosoever knows necessary causes and the efficacy of them, may foretel the effects; and when he sees the meeting and concurrence of several causes together, he may presage what the consequent effect will be of such a concurrence: so physicians foretel the progress of a disease, the increase or diminution of it by natural signs; and astronomers foretel eclipses by their observation of the motion of heavenly bodies, many years before they happen; can they be hid from God, with whom are the reasons of all things?* An expert gardener by knowing the root in the depth of winter, can tell what flowers and what fruit it will bear, and the month when they will appear, and shall not God much more, that knows the principles of all his creatures, and is exactly privy to all their natures and qualities, know what they will be, and what operations shall be from those principles? Now if God did know things only in their causes, his knowledge would not be more excellent than the knowledge of angels and men, though he might know more than they of the things that will come to pass, from every cause singly, and from the concurrence of many. Now as God is more excellent in being than his creature, so he is more excellent in the objects of his knowledge and the manner of his knowledge; well then shall a certain knowledge of something future, and a conjectural knowledge of many things, be found among men;

* Fuller's Pisgah l. 2. p. 281.

and shall a determinate and infallible knowledge of things to come be found no where, in no being? If the conjecture of future things savours of ignorance, and God knows them only by conjecture, there is then no such thing in being as a perfect intelligent being, and so no God.

God knows his own *decree and will*, and therefore must needs know all future things. If any thing be future, or to come to pass, it must be from itself, or from God; not from itself, then it would be independent and absolute; if it hath its futurity from God, then God must know what he hath decreed to come to pass; those things that are future in necessary causes God must know, because he willed them to be causes of such effects; he therefore knows them because he knows what he willed. The knowledge of God cannot arise from the things themselves, for then the knowledge of God would have a cause without him; and knowledge which is an eminent perfection, would be conferred upon him by his creatures. But as God sees things possible in the glass of his own power, so he sees things future in the glass of his own will; in his effecting will, if he hath decreed to produce them; in his permitting will, as he hath decreed to suffer them and dispose of them. Nothing can pass out of the rank of things merely possible into the order of things future, before some act of God's will hath passed for its futurition.*

It is not from the infiniteness of his own nature, simply considered, that God knows things to be future; † for as things are not future because God is infinite (for then all possible things should be future) so neither is any thing known to be future only because God is infinite, but because God hath decreed it; his declaration of things to come is founded upon his appointment of things to come.‡ In *Isa.* 44. 7, it is said, *and who, as I, shall call and declare it, since I appointed the ancient people, and the things that are coming?*§ Nothing is created or ordered in the world, but what God decreed

* Chequell. † Coccei sum. Theol. p. 50. ‡ Coccei sum. Theol. p. 50.
§ Gamaul in Aquin. Part 1. q. 21. cap. 3. p. 124.

to be created and ordered. God knows his own decree, and therefore all things which he hath decreed to exist in time; not the minutest part of the world could have existed without his will, not an action can be done without his will; as life the principle, so motion the fruit of that life, is by and from God; as he decreed life to this or that thing, so he decreed motion as the effect of life, and decreed to exert his power in concurring with them, for producing effects natural from such causes; for without such a concourse they could not have acted any thing, or produced any thing; and therefore as for natural things, which we call necessary causes, God foreseeing them all particularly in his own decree, foresaw also all effects which must necessarily flow from them, because such causes cannot but act when they are furnished with all things necessary for action. He knows his own decrees, and therefore necessarily knows what he hath decreed, or else we must say things come to pass whether God will or no; or that he wills he knows not what; but this cannot be, for *known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world, Acts* 15. 18. Now this necessarily flows from that principle first laid down, that God knows himself, since nothing is future without God's will; if God did not know future things, he would not know his own will; for as things possible could not be known by him, unless he knew the fulness of his own power; so things future could not be known by his understanding, unless he knew the resolves of his own will.

Thus the knowledge of God differs from the knowledge of men;* God's knowledge of his works precedes his works, man's knowledge of God's works follows his works, just as an artificer's knowledge of a watch, instrument, or engine, which he would make, is before his making of it; he knows the motions of it, and the reason of those motions before it is made, because he knows what he hath determined to work; he knows not those motions from the consideration of them after they were made, as the spectator does, who by viewing the instru-

* Maemonid. more Nevoch, Part 3. cap. 21. p. 393, 394.

ment after it is made gains knowledge from the sight and consideration of it, till he understands the reason of the whole; so we know things from the consideration of them after we see them in being, and therefore we know not future things: But God's knowledge does not arise from things because they are, but because he wills them to be, and therefore he knows every thing that shall be, because it cannot be without his will, as the Creator and Maintainer of all things; knowing his own substance he knows all his works.

If God did not know all future things he would be *mutable in his knowledge.* If he did not know all things that ever were, or are to be, there would be upon the appearance of every new object an addition of light to his understanding, and therefore such a change in him, as all new knowledge causes in the mind of a man, or as the sun works in the world upon its rising every morning, scattering the darkness that was upon the face of the earth; if he did not know them before they came, he would gain a knowledge by them when they came to pass, which he had not before they were effected; his knowledge would be new according to the newness of the objects, and multiplied according to the multitude of the objects. If God did not know things to come as perfectly as he knew things present and past, but knew those certainly, and the others doubtfully and conjecturally, he would suffer some change, and acquire some perfection in his knowledge, when those future things should cease to be future, and become present; for he would know it more perfectly when it were present, than he did when it was future, and so there would be a change from imperfection to a perfection; but God is every way immutable.

Besides, that perfection would not arise from the nature of God, but from the existence and presence of the thing; but who will affirm that God acquires any perfection of knowledge from his creature any more than he doth of being? He would not then have had that knowledge, and consequently that perfection from eternity, as he had when he created the world, and will not have a full perfection of the knowledge of his creature till the

end of the world, nor of immortal souls, which will certainly act as well as live to eternity; and so God never was, nor ever will be perfect in knowledge; for when you have conceived millions of years, wherein angels and souls live and act, there is still more coming than you can conceive, wherein they will act. And if God be always changing to eternity from ignorance to knowledge, as those acts come to be exerted by his creatures, he will not be perfect in knowledge, no not to eternity, but will always be changing from one degree of knowledge to another; a very unworthy conceit to entertain of the most blessed, perfect, and infinite God!

Hence then it follows, that

God *foreknows* all his creatures. All kinds which he determined to make, all particulars that should spring out of every species, the time when they should come forth, the manner how, *In thy book all my members were written, Psal.* 139. 16. *Members* is not in the Hebrew, whence some refer all to all living creatures whatsoever, and all the parts of them which God foresaw; he knew the numbers of creatures with all their parts, they were written in the book of his fore-knowledge; the duration of them, how long they shall remain in being, and act upon the stage; he knows their strength, the links of one cause with another, and what will follow in all their circumstances, and the series and combination of effects with their causes. The *duration* of every thing is foreknown, because determined, *Job* 14. 5, *Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass;* bounds are fixed, beyond which none shall reach; he speaks of days and months, not of years, to give us notice of God's particular foreknowledge of every thing, of every day, month, year, hour of a man's life. *All the acts of his creatures are foreknown by him.* All natural acts because he knows their causes; voluntary acts I shall speak of afterwards.

This foreknowledge was *certain.* For it is an unworthy notion of God to ascribe to him a conjectural knowledge; if there were only a conjectural knowledge, he could

but conjecturally foretel any thing; and then it is possible the events of things might be contrary to his predictions. It would appear then that God were deceived and mistaken, and then there could be no rule of trying things whether they were from God or no; for the rule God sets down to discern his words from the words of false prophets, is the event and certain accomplishment of what is predicted, *Deut.* 18. 21. To that question, How shall we know whether God hath spoken or no? He answers, that *if the thing doth not come to pass, the Lord hath not spoken.* If his knowledge of future things were not certain, there were no stability in this rule, it would fall to the ground. We never yet find God deceived in any prediction, but the event answered his fore-revelation; his foreknowledge, therefore, is certain and infallible. We cannot make God uncertain in his knowledge, but we must conceive him fluctuating and wavering in his will; but if his will be not *yea* and *nay*, but *yea*, his knowledge is certain, because he certainly wills and resolves.

This foreknowledge was *from eternity.* Seeing he knows things possible in his power, and things future in his will; if his power and resolves were from eternity, his knowledge must be so too; or else we must make him ignorant of his own power, and ignorant of his own will from eternity; and consequently not from eternity blessed and perfect. His knowledge of possible things must run parallel with his power, and his knowledge of future things run parallel with his will. If he willed from eternity, he knew from eternity what he willed; but that he did will from eternity we must grant, unless we would render him changeable, and conceive him to be made in time of not willing, willing. The knowledge God hath in time, was always one and the same, because his understanding is his proper essence, as perfect as his essence, and of an immutable nature. * And indeed the actual existence of a thing is not simply necessary to its being perfectly known; we may see a thing that is passed out of being, when it doth not actually exist; and a carpen-

* Gamach in Aquin. part. 1. q. 14. c. 3. p. 124.

ter may know the house he is to build before it be built, by the model of it in his own mind; much more we may conceive the same of God whose decrees were before the foundation of the world;* and to be before time was, and to be from eternity, hath no difference. As God in his being exceeds all beginning of time, so doth his knowledge all motions of time.

God foreknows all things as *present with him from eternity*,† As he knows mutable things with an immutable and firm knowledge, so he knows future things with a present knowledge; not that the things which are produced in time, were actually and really present with him in their own beings from eternity; for then they could not be produced in time; had they a real existence, then they would not be creatures, but God; and had they actual being, then they could not be future, for future speaks a thing to come that is not yet. If things had been actually present with him, and yet future, they had been made before they were made, and had a being before they had a being; but they were all present to his knowledge as if they were in actual being, because the reason of all things that were to be made, was present with him.‡

‡ The *reason* of the will of God that they shall be, was equally eternal with him, wherein he saw what, and when, and how, he would create things, how he would govern them, to what ends he would direct them. Thus all things are present to God's knowledge, though in their own nature they may be past or future, not in *esse reali*, but in *esse intelligibili*, objectively, not actually present;§ for as the unchangeableness and infiniteness of God's knowledge of changeable and finite things, doth not make the things he knows immutable and infinite, so neither doth the eternity of his knowledge make them actually present with him from eternity; but all things are present to his understanding, because he hath at once a view of all successions of times; and his knowledge of future things is as perfect as of present things, or what is past;

* Eph. 1. 5. and in other places.
† Gerhard Exeges, ch. 8. de Deo, sect. 13. p. 303.
‡ Bradward, l. 3. c. 14. § Hornbeck.

it is not a certain knowledge of present things, and an uncertain knowledge of future; but his knowledge of one is as certain and unerring as his knowledge of the other;* as a man that beholds a circle with several lines from the centre, beholds the lines as they are joined in the centre, beholds them also as they are distant and severed from one another, beholds them in their extent and in their point all at once, though they may have a great distance from one another. He saw from the beginning of time to the last minute of it, all things coming out of their causes, marching in their order according to his own appointment; as a man may see a multitude of ants, some creeping one way, some another, employed in several businesses for their winter provision. The eye of God at once runs through the whole circle of time; as the eye of man upon a tower sees all the passengers at once, though some be passed, some under the tower, some coming at a farther distance. *God*, saith Job, *looks to the end of the earth, and sees under the whole heaven, Job* 28. 24. The knowledge of God is expressed by sight in scripture, and futurity to God is the same thing as distance to us; we can with a perspective-glass make things that are afar off, appear as if they were near; and the sun, so many thousand miles distant from us, to appear as if it were at the end of the glass; why should then future things be at so great a distance from God's knowledge, when things so far from us may be made to approach so near to us?

God considers all things in his own simple knowledge, as if they were now acted; and therefore some have chosen to call the knowledge of things to come, not prescience or foreknowledge, but knowledge, because God sees all things in one instant, *scientia nunquam deficientis instantiæ.*† upon this account things that are to come, are set down in scripture as present, and sometimes as past, *Isa.* 9. 6, *Unto us a child is born*, though not yet born; so of the sufferings of Christ, *Isa.* 53, 4, &c. *He hath borne our griefs, he was wounded for our transgressions,*

* Pugio Fidei, part 1. chap. 19. † Boet. consolat, lib. 5, pros. 6.

he was taken from prison, &c. not shall be; and *Psal.* 22. 18, *They part my garments among them*, as if it were present; all to express the certainty of God's fore-knowledge, as if things were actually present before him.

This is *proper* to God, and *incommunicable* to any creature. Nothing but what is eternal can know all things that are to come. Suppose a creature might know things that are to come, after he is in being; he cannot know things simply as future, because there were things future before he was in being, The devils know not men's hearts, therefore cannot foretel their actions with any certainty; they may indeed have a knowledge of some things to come, but it is only conjectural, and often mistaken; as the devil was in his predictions among the heathen, and in his presage of Job's *cursing God to his face* upon his pressing calamities, *Job* 1. 11. Sometimes indeed they have a certain knowledge of something future by the revelation of God, when he uses them as instruments of his vengeance, or for the trial of his people, as in the case of Job, when he gave him commission to strip him of his goods; or as the angels have, when he uses them as instruments of the deliverance of his people.

Though this be certain, that God foreknows all things and actions; yet *the manner* of his knowing all things before they come, is not so easily resolved. We must not therefore deny this perfection in God, because we understand not the manner how he hath the knowledge of all things. It were unworthy for us to own no more of God than we can perfectly conceive of him: we should then own no more of him than that he exists. *Canst thou*, saith *Job*, *by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? Job* 11. 7. Do we not see things unknown to inferior creatures, to be known to ourselves? Irrational creatures do not apprehend the nature of a man, nor what we conceive of them when we look upon them; nor do we know what they fancy of us when they look wistly upon us; for ought that I know, we understand as little the manner of their imaginations, as they do of ours; and shall we ascribe darkness in God as to future things, because we

are ignorant of them, and of the manner how he should know them?* Shall we doubt whether God certainly knows those things which we only conjecture? As our power is not the measure of the power of God, so neither is our knowledge the judge of the knowledge of God, no better nor so well as an irrational nature can be the judge of our reason. Do we perfectly know the manner how we know? Shall we therefore deny that we know any thing? We know we have such a faculty which we call understanding, but does any man certainly know what it is? And because he does not, shall he deny that which is plain and evident to him? Because we cannot ascertain ourselves of the causes of the ebbing and flowing of the sea, of the manner how minerals are engendered in the earth, shall we therefore deny that which our eyes convince us of? And this will be a preparation to the last thing:—

5. God knows *all future contingencies*, that is, God knows *all things that shall accidentally happen*, or as we say, by chance; and he knows all the free motions of men's wills that shall be to the end of the world. If *all things be open to him*, *Heb.* 4. 13, then all contingencies are, for they are in the number of things; and as, according to Christ's speech, those things that are impossible to man, are possible to God; so those things which are unknown to man, are known to God; because of the infinite fulness and perfection of the divine understanding. Let us see *what a contingent is.*

That is contingent which we commonly call accidental, as when a tile falls suddenly upon a man's head as he is walking in the street; or when one letting off a musket at random, shoots another he did not intend to hit; such was that arrow whereby Ahab was killed, shot by a soldier *at a venture*, this some call a mixed contingent, made up partly of necessity, and partly of accident; it is necessary the bullet when sent out of the gun, or arrow out of the bow, should fly and light somewhere, but it is an accident that it hits this or that man, that was

* Ficinus in procl, cap. 19.

never intended by the archer. Other things, as voluntary actions, are purely contingents, and have nothing of necessity in them; all free actions that depend upon the will of man, whether to do, or not to do, are of this nature, because they depend not upon a necessary cause, as burning doth upon the fire, moistening upon water, or as descent, or falling down, is necessary to a heavy body; for these cannot in their own nature do otherwise; but the other actions depend upon a free agent, able to turn to this or that point, and determine himself as he pleases.

Now we must know, that what is accidental in regard of the creature, is not so in regard of God; the manner of Ahab's death was accidental, in regard of the hand by which he was slain, but not in regard of God who foretold his death, and foreknew the shot, and directed the arrow. God was not uncertain before of the manner of his fall, nor hovered over the battle to watch for an opportunity to accomplish his own prediction; what may be or not be, in regard of us, is certain in regard of God; to imagine that what is accidental to us, is so to God, is to measure God by our short line. How many events following upon the results of princes in their counsels, seem to persons ignorant of those counsels to be a haphazard, yet were not contingencies to the prince and his assistants, but foreseen by him as certainly to issue so as they do, which they knew before would be the fruit of such causes and instruments they would knit together?

That may be necessary in regard of God's foreknowledge which is merely accidental in regard of the natural disposition of the immediate causes which do actually produce it; contingent in its own nature, and in regard of us; but fixed in the knowledge of God.* One illustrates it by this similitude: a master sends two servants to one and the same place, two several ways, unknown to one another, they meet at the place which their master had appointed them; their meeting is accidental to them,

* Zanch.

one knows not of the other, but it was foreseen by the master that they should so meet, and that in regard of them it would seem a mere accident, till they came to explain the business to one another: both the necessity of their meeting in regard of their master's order, and the casualty of it in regard of themselves, were in both their circumstances foreknown by the master that employed them. For the clearing of this, take it in this method.

1. It is an unworthy conceit of God in any *to exclude him* from the knowledge of these things.

It will be a strange contracting of him, to allow him *no greater a knowledge than we have ourselves.* Contingencies are known to us when they come into act, and pass from futurity to reality; and when they are present to us, we can order our affairs accordingly: Shall we allow God no greater measure of knowledge than we have, and make him as blind as ourselves, not to see things of that nature before they come to pass? Shall God know them no more, shall we imagine God knows no otherwise, than we know? and that he, like us, stands gazing with admiration at events? Man can conjecture many things; is it fit to ascribe the same uncertainty to God; as though he, as well as we, could have no assurance till the issues appear in the view of all? If God doth not certainly foreknow them, he but conjectures them; but a conjectural knowledge is by no means to be fastened on God; for that is not knowledge but guess, and destroys a Deity by making him subject to mistake; for he that only guesses, may guess wrong; so that this is to make God like ourselves, and strip him of an universally acknowledged perfection of omniscience. A conjectural knowledge, saith one, is as unworthy of God, as the creature is unworthy of omniscience? It is certain man hath a liberty to act many things this or that way as he pleases; to walk to this or that quarter, to speak or not to speak, to do this or that, or not to do it; which way a man will certainly determine himself, is unknown before to any creature, yea often at the present to himself, for he may be in suspense; but shall we imagine this future determination of himself is concealed from God?

Those that deny God's foreknowledge in such cases, must either say, that God hath an opinion that a man will resolve rather this way than that; but then if a man by his liberty determine himself contrary to the opinion of God, is not God then deceived? and what rational creature can own him for a God that can be deceived in any thing? or else they must say that God is at uncertainty, and suspends his opinion without determining it any way: then he cannot know free acts till they are done; he would then depend upon the creature for his information; his knowledge would be every instant increased, as things, he knew not before, came into act; and since there are every minute an innumerable multitude of various imaginations in the minds of men, there would be every minute an accession of new knowledge to God, which he had not before; besides this knowledge would be mutable according to the wavering resolutions of men, one while standing to this point, another while to that, if he depended upon the creatures' determination for his knowledge.

If *the free acts* of men were unknown before to God, no man can see *how there can be any government of the world by him.* Such contingencies may happen, and such resolves of men's freewills unknown to God, as may perplex his affairs, and put him upon new counsels and methods for attaining those ends which he settled at the first creation of things: if things happen, which God knows not of before, this must be the consequence; where there is no foresight there is no providence; things may happen so sudden, if God be ignorant of them, that they may give a check to his intentions and scheme of government, and put him upon changing the model of it. How often doth a small intervening circumstance, unforeseen by man, dash in pieces a long meditated and well formed design? To govern necessary causes, as sun and stars, whose effects are natural and constant in themselves, is easy to be imagined; but how to govern the world, that consists of so many men of freewill, able to determine themselves to this or that, and which have no constancy in themselves, as the sun and stars have,

cannot be imagined, unless we allow in God as great a certainty of fore-knowledge of the designs and actions of men, as there is inconstancy in their resolves.

God must be altering the methods of his government every day, every hour, every minute, according to the determinations of men, which are so various and changeable in the whole compass of the world in the space of one minute; he must wait to see what the counsels of men will be, before he could settle his own methods of government; and so must govern the world according to their mutability, and not according to any certainty in himself. But his *counsel is stable* in the midst of multitudes of free *devices* in the heart of man, *Prov.* 19. 21, and knowing them all before, orders them to be subservient to his own stable counsel. If he cannot know what tomorrow will bring forth in the mind of a man, how can he certainly settle his own determination of governing him? His decrees and resolves must be temporal, and arise *pro re nata*, and he must always be in counsel what he should do upon every change of men's minds. This is an unworthy conceit of the infinite majesty of heaven, to make his government depend upon the resolves of men, rather than their resolves upon the design of God.

2. It is therefore certain, that God *foreknows the free and voluntary acts of man.* How could he else order his people to ask of him *things to come*, in order to their deliverance, such things as depended upon the will of man, if he foreknew not the motions of their will? *Isa.* 45. 11.

1. He knows *actions good or indifferent depending upon the liberty of man's will* as much as any whatsoever. Several of these he hath foretold; not only a person to build up Jerusalem was predicted by him, but the name of that person, Cyrus, *Isa.* 44. 28. What is more contingent, or is more the effect of the liberty of man's will than the names of their children? Was not the destruction of the Babylonish empire foretold, which Cyrus undertook, not by any compulsion, but by a free inclination and resolve of his own will? and was not the dismission of the Jews into their own country, a voluntary act in that con-

queror? If you consider the liberty of man's will, might not Cyrus as well have continued their yoke, as have struck of their chains, and kept them captive as well as dismissed them? Had it not been for his own interest, rather to have strengthened the fetters of so turbulent a people, who being tenacious of their religion and laws, different from that professed by the whole world, were like to make disturbances more when they were linked in a body in their own country, than when they were transplanted and scattered into the several parts of his empire? It was in the power of Cyrus, (take him as a man) to chuse one or the other; his interest invited him to continue their captivity, rather than grant their deliverance; yet God knew that he would willingly do this rather than the other; he knew this which depended upon the will of Cyrus; and why may not an infinite God foreknow the free acts of all men, as well as of one? If the liberty of Cyrus's will was no hinderance to God's certain and infallible foreknowledge of it, how can the contingency of any other thing be a hinderance to him? for there is the same reason of one and all; and his government extends to every village, every family, every person, as well as to kingdoms and nations.

So God foretold by his prophet, not only the destruction of Jeroboam's altar, but the name of the person that should be the instrument of it, 1 *Kings* 13. 2, and this about three hundred years before Josiah's birth. It is a wonder that none of the pious kings of Judah in detestation of idolatry, and hopes to recover again the kingdom of Israel, had not in all that space named one of their sons by that name of Josiah, in hopes that that prophecy should be accomplished by him: that Manasseh only should do this, who was the greatest imitator of Jeroboam's idolatry among all the Jewish kings, and indeed went beyond them; and had no mind to destroy in another kingdom what he propagated in his own. What is freer than the imposition of a name, yet this he foreknew, and this Josiah was Manasseh's son, 2 *Kings* 21. 26. Was there any thing more voluntary than for Pharaoh to honour the butler by restoring him to his place, and

punish the baker by hanging him on a gibbet? yet this was foretold, *Gen.* 40. 8. And were not all the voluntary acts of men, which were the means of Joseph's advancement, foreknown by God, as well as his exaltation, which was the end he aimed at by those means?

Can all the free acts of man surmount the infinite capacity of the divine understanding? If God singles out one voluntary action in man as contingent as any, and lying among a vast number of other designs and resolutions, both antecedent and subsequent; why should he not know the whole mass of men's thoughts and actions, and pierce into all that the liberty of man's will can effect? Why should he not know every grain, as well as one that lies in the midst of many of the same kind?—And since the scripture gives so large an account of contingents, predicted by God; no man can certainly prove that any thing is unforeknown to him. It is as reasonable to think he knows every contingent; as that he knows some that lie as much hid from the eye of any creature, since there is no more difficulty to an infinite understanding to know all, than to know some *. Indeed if we deny God's foreknowledge of the voluntary actions of men, we must strike ourselves off from the belief of scripture predictions, that yet remain unaccomplished, and will be brought about by the voluntary engagements of men, as the ruin of antichrist, &c. If God foreknows not the secret motions of man's will, how can he foretel them? If we strip him of this perfection of prescience, why should we believe a word of scripture-predictions? All the credit of the word of God is torn up by the roots. If God were uncertain of such events, how can we reconcile God's declaration of them to his truth; and his demanding our belief of them, to his goodness? Were it good and righteous in God to urge us to the belief of that he were uncertain of himself? how could he be true in predicting things he were not sure of? or good in requiring

* The Stoicks that thought their souls to be some particle of God, Ἀποσπάσματα, pieces pulled off from him, did conclude from thence that he knew all the motions of their souls as his own mover, as things coherent with him. Arrian Epictet. lib. 1. chap. 14. p. 60.

credit to be given to that which might be false? This would necessarily follow, if God did not foreknow the motions of men's wills, whereby many of his predictions were fulfilled, and some remain yet to be accomplished.

2. God foreknows the *voluntary sinful motion of men's wills.* God hath *foretold several of them.* Were not all the minute sinful circumstances about the death of our blessed Redeemer, as the piercing him, giving him gall to drink, foretold, as well as the not breaking his bones, and parting his garments? What were those but the free actions of men, which they did willingly without any constraint? And those foretold by David, Isaiah, and other prophets, some above a thousand, and some eight hundred, and some more, some fewer years, before they came to pass; and events punctually answered the prophecies. Many sinful acts of men, which depended upon their free-will, have been foretold: the Egyptians' voluntary oppressing Israel, *Gen.* 15. 13. Pharaoh's *hardening his heart* against the voice of Moses, *Exod.* 3. 19. That Isaiah's message would be in vain to the people, *Isa.* 6. 9. That the Israelites would be rebellious after Moses' death, and turn idolaters, *Deut.* 31. 16. Judas's betraying of our Saviour, a voluntary action, *John* 6. *ult.* he was not forced to do what he did, for he had some kind of repentance for it; and not violence, but voluntariness, falls under repentance.

His *truth* hath depended upon this foresight. Let us consider that in *Gen.* 5, 16. but *the fourth generation they shall come hither again;* that is, the posterity of Abraham shall come into Canaan; *for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.** God makes a promise to Abraham, of giving his posterity the land of Canaan, not presently, but in the fourth generation; if the truth of God be infallible in the performance of his promise, his understanding is as infallible in the foresight of the Amorites' sin; the fulness of their iniquity was to precede the Israelites' possession. Did the truth of God depend up-

* Vid. Rivet. in loc. exerci. 86. p. 329.

on an uncertainty? did he make the promise hand over head (as we say)? How could he with any wisdom and truth assure Israel of the possesion of the land in the fourth generation, if he had not been sure that the Amorites would fill up the measure of their iniquities by that time? If Abraham had been a Socinian, to deny God's knowledge of the free acts of men, had he not had a fine excuse for unbelief? What would his reply have been to God? Alas, Lord, this is not a promise to be relied upon, the Amorites' iniquity depends upon the acts of their free will, and such thou canst have no knowledge of; thou canst see no more than a likelihood of their iniquity being full, and therefore there is but a likelihood of thy performing thy promise, and not a certainty. Would not this be judged not only a saucy but a blasphemous answer? And upon these principles the truth of the most faithful God had been dashed to uncertainty and a peradventure.

God provided a *remedy for man's sin*, and therefore foresaw the *entrance of it into the world* by the fall of Adam. He had a decree before the foundation of the world, to manifest his wisdom in the gospel by Jesus Christ, an *eternal purpose in Jesus Christ*, *Eph.* 3. 11. And a decree of election passed before the foundation of the world; a separation of some to redemption, and forgiveness of sin in the blood of Christ, in whom they were from eternity *chosen*, as well as in time *accepted* in Christ, *Eph.* 1. 4. 6, 7, which is called *a purpose in himself*, ver. 9; had not sin entered, there had been no occasion for the death of the Son of God, it being everywhere in scripture laid upon that score; a decree for the shedding of blood, supposed a decree for the permission of sin, and a certain fore-knowledge of God that it would be committed by man. An uncertainty of foreknowledge, and a fixedness of purpose, are not consistent in a wise man, much less in *the only wise God.* God's purpose to manifest his wisdom to men and angels in this way, might have been defeated, if God had only a conjectural foreknowledge of the fall of man; and all those solemn purposes of displaying his perfections in those methods had been

to no purpose;* the provision of a remedy supposed a certainty of the disease: if a *sparrow fall not to the ground without the will of God*, how much less could such deplorable ruin fall upon mankind, without God's will permitting it, and his knowledge foreseeing it?

It is not hard to conceive how God might foreknow it;† he indeed decreed to create man in an excellent state; the goodness of God could not but furnish him with a power to stand; yet in his wisdom he might foresee, that the devil would be envious to man's happiness, and would out of envy attempt his subversion. As God knew of what temper the faculties were he had endued man with, and how far they were able to endure the assaults of a temptation; so he also foreknew the grand subtility of Satan, how he would lay his mine, and to what point he would drive his temptation; how he would propose and manage it, and direct his battery against the sensitive appetite, and assault the weakest part of the fort; might he not foresee that the efficacy of the temptation would exceed the measure of the resistance? cannot God know how far the malice of Satan would extend, what shot he would according to his nature use, how high he would charge his temptation without his powerful restraint, as well as an engineer judge how many shots of a cannon will make a breach in a town, and how many casks of powder will blow up a fortress, who never yet built the one nor founded the other? We may easily conclude God could not be deceived in the judgment of the issue and event, since he knew how far he would let Satan loose, how far he would permit man to act; and since he dives to the bottom of the nature of all things, he foresaw that Adam was endued with an ability to stand; as he foresaw that Benhadad might naturally recover of his decease; but he foresaw also that Adam would sink under the allurements of the temptation, as he foresaw that Hazael would not let Benhadad live, 2 *Kings* 8. 10.

* Mares. cont. Volkel. lib. 1. cap. 24. p. 343.
* Amyrald. de Prædestin. cap. 6.

Now since the whole race of mankind lies in corruption, and is subject to the power of the devil, may not God that knows that corruption in every man's nature, and the force of every man's spirit, and what every particular nature will incline him to upon such objects proposed to him, and what the reasons of the temptation will be, know also the issues? Is there any difficulty in God's foreknowing this, since man knowing the nature of one he is well acquainted with, can conclude what sentiments he will have, and how he will behave himself upon presenting this or that object to him. If a man that understands the disposition of his child or servant, knows before what he will do upon such an occasion; may not God much more, who knows the inclinations of all his creatures, and from eternity run with his eyes over all the works he intended? Our wills are in the number of causes; and since God knows our wills, as causes, better than we do ourselves, why should he be ignorant of the effects.

God determines to give grace to such a man; not to give it to another, but leave him to himself, and suffer such temptations to assault him; now God knowing the corruption of man in the whole mass, and in every part of it, is it not easy for him to foreknow what the future actions of the will will be, when the tinder and fire meet together, and how such a man will determine himself both as to the substance and manner of the action? Is it not easy for him to know, how a corrupted temper and a temptation will suit? God is exactly privy to all the gall in the hearts of men, and what their principles will be, before they have a being. *He knows their thoughts afar off, Psal.* 139. 2, as far off as eternity, as some explain the words; and thoughts are as voluntary as any thing; he knows the power and inclinations of men in the order of second causes; he understands the corruption of men, as well as *the poison of dragons, and the venom of asps;* this is *laid up in store with him and sealed among his treasures, Deut.* 32. 33, 34, among the treasures of his fore-knowledge.

What was the cruelty of Hazael, but a free act? yet

God knew the frame of his heart, and what acts of murder and oppression would spring from that bitter fountain, before Hazael had conceived them in himself, 2 *Kings* 8. 12; as a man that knows the mineral through which waters pass, may know what relish they will have before they appear above the earth: so our Saviour knew how Peter would deny him; he knew what quantity of powder would serve for such a battery; in what measure he would let loose Satan, how far he would leave the reins in Peter's hands, and then the issue might easily be known; and so in every act of man, God knows in his own will what measure of grace he will give, to determine the will to good, and what measure of grace he will withdraw from such a person, or not give to him, and consequently, how far such a person will fall or not. God knows the inclinations of the creature; he knows his own permissions, what degrees of grace he will either allow him or, keep from him, according to which will be the degree of his sin. This may in some measure help our conceptions in this, though, as was said before, the manner of God's foreknowledge is not so easily explicable.

3. God's foreknowledge of man's voluntary actions *doth not necessitate the will of man.* The foreknowledge of God is not deceived, nor the liberty of man's will diminished. I shall not trouble you with any school distinctions, but be as plain as I can, laying down several propositions in this case.

1. It is certain all necessity does *not take away liberty.* Indeed a compulsive necessity takes away liberty; but a necessity of immutability removes not liberty from God; why should then a necessity of infallibity in God remove liberty from the creature? God necessarily created the world, because he decreed it; yet freely, because his will from eternity stood to it; he freely decreed it, and freely created it; as the apostle saith of God's decrees, *Who hath been his counsellor? Rom.* 11. 34, so of his actions I may say, Who hath been his compeller? He freely decreed, and he freely created. Jesus Christ necessarily took our flesh, because he had covenanted with God so to do, yet he acted freely and voluntary according to that

covenant, otherwise his death had not been efficacious for us. A good man naturally, necessarily loves his children, yet voluntary: it is part of the happiness of the blessed, to love God unchangeably, yet freely, for it would not be their happiness if it were done by compulsion. What is done by force, cannot be called felicity, because there is no delight or complacency in it; and though the blessed love God freely, yet if there were a possibility of change, it would not be their happiness; their blessedness would be damped by their fear of falling from this love, and consequently from their nearness to God, in whom their happiness consists: God foreknows that they will love him for ever; but are they therefore compelled for ever to love him? If there were such a kind of constraint, heaven would be rendered burdensome to them, and so no heaven.

Again, God's foreknowledge of what he will do, doth not *necessitate him to do:* he foreknew that he would create a world, yet he freely created a world. God's foreknowledge doth not necessitate himself, and why should it necessitate us more than himself? We may instance in ourselves: when we will a thing, we necessarily use our faculty of will; and when we freely will any thing, it is necessary that we freely will; but this necessity does not exclude but include liberty; or more plainly, when a man writes or speaks, whilst he writes or speaks, those actions are necessary, because to speak and be silent, to write and not to write at the same time, are impossible; yet our writing or speaking does not take away the power not to write or to be silent at that time if a man would be so; for he might have chose whether he would have spoke or writ. So there is a necessity of such actions of man which God foresees; that is, a necessity of infallibility, because God cannot be deceived; but not a coactive necessity, as if they were compelled by God to act thus or thus.

2. No man can say in any of his voluntary actions *that he ever found any force upon him.* When any of us have done any thing according to our wills, can we say we could not have done the contrary to it? Were we de-

termined to it in our our own intrinsic nature, or did we not determine ourselves? Did we not act either according to our reason, or according to outward allurements; did we find any thing without us or within us, that forced our wills to the embracing this or that? Whatever action you do, you do it because you judge it fit to be done; or because you will do it. What though God foresaw that you would do so, and that you would do this or that, did you feel any force upon you? did you not act according to your nature? God foresees that you will eat or walk at such a time; do you find any thing that moves you to eat, but your own appetite? or to walk, but your own reason and will? If prescience had imposed any necessity upon man, should we not probably have found some kind of plea from it in the mouth of Adam? He knew as much as any man ever since knew of the nature of God, as discoverable in creation; he could not in innocence fancy an ignorant God, a God that knew nothing of future things; he could not be so ignorant of his own action, but he must have perceived a force upon his will, had there been any; had he thought that God's prescience imposed any necessity upon him, he would not have omitted the plea, especially when he was so daring as to charge the providence of God in the *gift of the woman* to him, to be the cause of his crime.

How came his posterity to invent new charges against God, which their father Adam never thought of, who had more knowledge than all of them? He could find no cause of his sin but the liberty of his own will; he charges it not upon any necessity from the devil or any necessity from God; nor doth he alledge the gift of the woman as a necessary cause of his sin, but an occasion of it, by giving the fruit to him. Judas knew that our Saviour foreknew his treachery, for he had told him of it in the hearing of his disciples, *John* 13. 21, 26, yet he never charged the necessity of his crime upon the fore-knowledge of his master: if Judas had not done it freely, he had had no reason to repent of it; his repentance justifies Christ from imposing any necessity upon him by that foreknowledge. No man acts any thing, but he can give an account of the motives of his action; he cannot father it

upon a blind necessity; the will cannot be compelled, for then it would cease to be will. God does not root up the foundations of nature, or change the order of it, and make men unable to act like men, that is, as free agents. God foreknows the actions of irrational creatures, this concludes no violence upon their nature; for we find their actions to be according to their nature, and spontaneous.

3. God's foreknowledge is not, simply considered, *the cause of any thing*. It puts nothing into things, but only beholds them as present, and arising from their proper causes. The knowledge of God is not the principle of things, or the cause of their existence, but directive of the action; nothing is because God knows it, but because God wills it, either positively or permissively; God knows all things possible, yet because God knows them, they are not brought into actual existence, but remain still only as things possible; knowledge only apprehends a thing, but acts nothing; it is the rule of acting, but not the cause of acting; the will is the immediate principle, and the power the immediate cause; to know a thing, is not to do a thing, for then we may be said to do every thing that we know; but every man knows those things which he never did, nor never will do; knowledge in itself is an apprehension of a thing, and is not the cause of it. A spectator of a thing is not the cause of that which he sees, that is, he is not the cause of it as he beholds it. We see a man write, we know before that he will write at such a time; but this foreknowledge is not the cause of his writing. We see a man walk, but our vision of him brings no necessity of walking upon him; he was free to walk or not to walk.*

We foreknow that death will seize upon all men, we foreknow that the seasons of the year will succeed one another; yet is not our foreknowledge the cause of this succession of spring after winter, or of the death of all men, or any man. We see one man fighting with another, our sight is not the cause of that contest, but some quarrel among themselves exciting their own passions.

* Rawley of the World, lib. 1. cap. 1. sect. 12.

As the knowledge of present things imposes no necessity upon them while they are acting and present; so the knowledge of future things imposeth no necessity upon them while they are coming. We are certain there will be men in the world to-morrow, and that the sea will ebb and flow; but is this knowledge of ours the cause that those things will be so? I know that the sun will rise to-morrow, it is true that it shall rise; but it is not true that my fore-knowledge makes it to rise. If a physician prognosticates upon seeing the intemperances and debaucheries of men, that they will fall into such a distemper, is his prognostication any cause of their disease, or of the sharpness of any symptoms attending it? The prophet foretold the cruelty of Hazael before he committed it; but who will say that the prophet was the cause of his commission of that evil? And thus the foreknowledge of God takes not away the liberty of man's will, no more than a foreknowledge that we have of any man's actions, takes away his liberty. We may upon our knowledge of the temper of a man, certainly foreknow that if he falls into such company, and gets among his cups, he will be drunk; but is this fore-knowledge the cause that he is drunk? No, the cause is the liberty of his own will, and not resisting the temptation.

God purposes to leave such a man to himself and his own ways; and man being so left, God foreknows what will be done by him according to that corrupt nature which is in him; though the decree of God of leaving a man to the liberty of his own will be certain, yet the liberty of man's will as thus left, is the cause of all the extravagancies he commits. Suppose Adam had stood, would not God certainly have foreseen that he would have stood? yet it would have been concluded that Adam had stood, not by any necessity of God's foreknowledge, but by the liberty of his own will. Why should then the fore-knowledge of God add more necessity to his falling than to his standing;* And though it be said sometimes in scripture, that such a thing was

* Rivet. in Isa. 53. 1. p. 16.

done *that the scripture might be fulfilled*, as *John* 12. 38, *that the saying of Esaias might be fulfilled, Lord, who hath believed our report?* The word that, doth not infer that the prediction of the prophet was the cause of the Jews' unbelief, but infers this, that the prediction was manifested to be true by their unbelief, and the event answered the prediction; this prediction was not the cause of their sin, but their foreseen sin was the cause of this prediction; and so the particle that, is taken, *Psal.* 51. 6. *Against thee, thee only have I sinned, that thou mightest be justified*, &c. the justifying God, was not the end and intent of the sin, but the event of it upon his acknowledgment.

4. God foreknows things, because they will come to pass; but *things are not future because God knows them.* Foreknowledge pre-supposes the object which is fore-known; a thing that is to come to pass, is the object of the divine knowledge, but not the cause of the act of divine knowledge; and though the foreknowledge of God in eternity precede the actual presence of a thing which is foreseen as future; yet the future thing in regard of its futurity, is as eternal as the foreknowledge of God: as the voice is uttered before it be heard, and a thing is visible before it be seen, and a thing knowable before it be known. But how comes it to be knowable to God? It must be answered, either in the power of God as a thing possible, or in the will of God as a thing future, he first willed, and then knew what he willed; he knew what he willed to effect, and he knew what he willed to permit; as he willed the death of Christ by a determinate counsel, and willed the permission of the Jews' sin, and the ordering of the malice of their nature to that end, *Acts* 2. 22. God decrees to make a rational creature, and to govern him by a law; God decrees not to hinder this rational creature from transgressing his law; and God foresees that what he would not hinder, would come to pass. Man did not sin because God foresaw him; but God foresaw him to sin, because man would sin. If Adam and other men would have acted otherwise, God would have fore-known that they would have acted well;

God foresaw our actions because they would so come to pass by the motion of our free-will, which he would permit, which he would concur with, which he would order to his own holy and glorious ends, for the manifestation of the perfection of his nature. If I see a man lie in a sink, no necessity is inferred upon him from my sight to lie in that filthy place, but there is a necessity inferred by him that lies there, that I should see him in that condition if I pass by, and cast my eye that way.

5. God did not only foreknow our actions, but the *manner of our actions.* That is, he not only knew that we would do such actions, but that we would do them freely; he foresaw that the will would freely determine itself to this or that; the knowledge of God takes not away the nature of things; though God knows possible things, yet they remain in the nature of possibility; and though God knows contingent things, yet they remain in the nature of contingencies: and though God knows free agents, yet they remain in the nature of liberty. God did not foreknow the actions of man, as necessary, but as free; so that liberty is rather established by this fore-knowlede, than removed; God did not foreknow that Adam had not a power to stand, or that any man hath not a power to omit such a sinful action, but that he would not omit it. Man hath a power to do otherwise than that which God foreknows he will do: Adam was not determined by any inward necessity to fall, nor any man by any inward necessity to commit this or that particular sin; but God foresaw that he would fall, and fall freely; for he saw the whole circle of means and causes whereby such and such actions should be produced; and can be no more ignorant of the motions of our wills, and the manner of them, than an artificer can be ignorant of the motions of his watch, and how far the spring will let down the string in the space of an hour; he sees all causes leading to such events in their whole order, and how the free-will of man will comply with this, or refuse that; he changes not the manner of the creature's operation, whatsoever it be.

6. But what if the foreknowledge of God, and the

liberty of the will, *cannot be fully reconciled by man?* shall we therefore deny a *perfection in God to support a liberty in ourselves?* Shall we rather fasten ignorance upon God, and accuse him of blindnes, to maintain our liberty? That God fore-knew every thing, and yet that there is liberty in the rational creature, are both certain; but how fully to reconcile them, may surmount the understanding of man. Some truths the disciples were not capable of bearing in the days of Christ; and several truths our understandings cannot reach as long as the world lasts; yet in the mean time we must on the one hand take heed of conceiving God to be ignorant, and on the other hand of imagining the creature necessitated; the one will render God imperfect, and the other will seem to render him unjust, in punishing man for that sin which he could not avoid, but was brought into by a fatal necessity. God is sufficient to render a reason of his own proceedings, and clear up all at the day of judgment; it is a part of man's curiosity since the fall, to be prying into God's secrets, things too high for him; whereby he confounds his understanding. It is a cursed affectation that runs in the blood of Adam's posterity, *to know as God*, though our first father smarted and ruined his posterity in that attempt; the ways and knowledge of God are as much *above our thoughts* and conceptions, *as the heavens are above the earth*, *Isa.* 55. 9,* and so sublime, that we cannot comprehend them in their true and just greatness; his designs are so mysterious, and the ways of his conduct so profound, that it is not possible to dive into them: the force of our understandings is below his infinite wisdom, and therefore we should adore him with an humble astonishment, and cry out with the apostle, *Rom.* 11. 33, *Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments! and his ways past finding out!* Whenever we meet with depths that we cannot fathom; let us remember that he is God, and we his creatures; and not be guilty of so great extravagance, as to think that a subject can pierce into all the secrets of a prince, or a work

* Daille Melang. part. 1. p. 712, 725.

understand all the operations of the artificer. Let us only resolve not to fasten any thing on God that is unworthy of the perfection of his nature, and dishonourable to the glory of his majesty; nor imagine that we can ever step out of the rank of creatures to the glory of the Deity to understand fully every thing in his nature.

PART IV.

HOW GOD KNOWS ALL THINGS.

God knows all things by his own essence—By one act of intuition—Does not know as we do—Knows all things independently—Distinctly—Infallibly—Immutably—Perpetually—Reasons to prove the truth of his knowledge—He knows more than any creature knows—All the knowledge of creatures is from him—Accusations of conscience prove his knowledge—Every creature is his production—Without this knowledge God could no more govern than he could create the world.

III. HOW God knows all things. As it is necessary we should conceive God to be an understanding being, else he could not be God; so we must conceive his understanding to be infinitely more pure and perfect than ours in the act of it, else we liken him to ourselves, and debase him as low as his foot-stool. * As among creatures there are degrees of being and perfection; plants above earth and sand, because they have a power of growth; beasts above plants, because to their power of growth there is an addition of excellencey of sense; rational creatures above beasts, because to sense there is added the dignity

* Maxim. Tyrius Dissert. 1. p. 9, 10.

of reason: the understanding of man is more noble than all the vegetative power of plants, or the sensitive power of beasts: God therefore must be infinitely more excellent in his understanding, and therefore in the manner of it. As man differs from a beast in regard of his knowledge; so doth God also from man, in regard to his knowledge. As God therefore is in being and perfection infinitely more above a man than a man is above a beast, the manner of his knowledge must be infinitely more above a man's knowledge, than the knowledge of a man is above that of a beast; our understandings can clasp an object in a moment, that is at a great distance from our sense; our eye by one elevated motion can view the heavens; the manner of God's understanding must be unconceivably above our glimmerings; as the manner of his being is infinitely more perfect than all beings, so must the manner of his understanding be infinitely more perfect than all created understandings.

* Indeed the manner of God's knowledge can no more be known by us, than his essence can be known by us; and the same incapacity in man, which renders him unable to comprehend the being of God, renders him as unable to comprehend the manner of God's understanding. As there is a vast distance between the essence of God and our beings, so there is between the thoughts of God and our thoughts; the heavens are not so much higher than the earth, as the thoughts of God *are above the thoughts of men*, yea, and of the highest angel, *Isa.* 55. 8, 9, yet though we know not the manner of God's knowledge, we know that he knows; as though we know not the infinity of God, yet we know that he is infinite. It is God's sole prerogative to know himself, what he is; and it is equally his prerogative to know how he knows; the manner of God's knowledge therefore must be considered by us, as free from those imperfections our knowledge is incumbered with.

In general. God necessarily knows all things; he is necessarily omnipresent, because of the immensity of his essence; so he is necessarily omniscient, because of the

* Maimonides More Nevochim. part. 3. c. 20. p. 391, 392, 393.

infiniteness of his understanding. It is no more at the liberty of his will, whether he will know all things, than whether he will be able to create all things; it is no more at the liberty of his will, whether he will be omniscient, than whether he will be holy; he can as little be ignorant as he can be impure; he knows not all things because he will know them, but because it is essential to his nature to know them. In particular,

Proposition 1. God knows by *his own essence;* that is, he sees the nature of things in the ideas of his own mind, and the events of things in the decrees of his own will; he knows them not by viewing the things, but by viewing himself; his own essence is the mirror and book wherein he beholds all things that he ordains, disposes, and executes; and so he knows all things in the first and original cause; which is no other than his own essence willing, and his own essence executing what he wills; he knows them in his power, as the physical principle; in in his will, as the moral principle of things, as some speak.

He borrows not the knowledge of creatures from the creatures, nor depends upon them for means of understanding, as we poor worms do, who are beholden to the objects abroad to assist us with images of things, and to our senses to convey them into our minds: God would then acquire a perfection from those things which are below himself, and an excellency from those things that are vile; his knowledge would not precede the being of the creatures, but the creatures would be before the act of his knowledge. If he understood by images drawn from the creatures, as we do, there would be something in God which is not God, viz. the images of of things drawn from outward objects: God would then depend upon creatures for that which is more noble than a bare being; for to be understanding, is more excellent than barely to be. Besides, if God's knowledge of his creatures were derived from the creatures by the impression of any thing upon him, as there is upon us, he could not know from eternity, because from eternity there was no actual existence of any thing but himself; and therefore there could not be any images of any thing,

because there was not any thing in being but God; as there is no principle of being to any thing but by his essence; so there is no principle of the knowledge of any thing by himself but his essence: if the knowledge of God were distinct from his essence, his knowledge were not eternal, because there is nothing eternal but his essence.

His understanding is not a faculty in him as it is in us, but the same with his essence, because of the simplicity of his nature; God is not made up of various parts, one distinct from another as we are, and therefore doth not understand by a part of himself, but by himself; so that to be, and to understand, is the same with God; his essence is not one thing, and the power whereby he understands, another; he would then be compounded, and not be the most simple being. This also is necessary for the perfection of God; for the more perfect and noble the way and manner of knowing is, the more perfect and noble is the knowledge. The perfection of knowledge depends upon the excellency of the medium whereby we know. As a knowledge by reason is a more noble way of knowing than knowledge by sense; so it is more excellent for God to know by his essence, than by any thing without him, any thing mixed with him; the first would render him dependent, and the other would demolish his simplicity.

Again, the natures of all things are contained in God; not formally; for then the nature of the creatures would be God. But eminently; *he that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? Psal.* 94. 9. * He hath in himself eminently the beauty, perfection, life, and vigour of all creatures; he created nothing contrary to himself, but every thing with some traces of himself in them; he could not have pronounced them good, as he did, had there been any thing in them contrary to his own goodness; and therefore as his essence primarily represents itself, so it represents the creatures, and makes them known to him. As the

* Dionys.

essence of God is eminently all things, so by understanding his essence he eminently understands all things. And therefore he hath not one knowledge of himself, and another knowledge of the creatures; but by knowing himself as the original and exemplary cause of all things, he cannot be ignorant of any creature which he is the cause of; so that he knows all things, not by an understanding of them, but by an understanding of himself; by understanding his own power as the efficient of them, his own will as the order of them, his own goodness as the adorner and beautifier of them, his own wisdom as the disposer of them, and his own holiness, to which many of their actions are contrary.

* As he sees all things possible in his own power, because he is able to produce them; so he sees all things future in his own will; decreeing to effect them, if they be good; or decreeing to permit them, if they be evil. In this glass he sees what he will give being to, and what he will suffer to fall into a deficiency, without looking out of himself, or borrowing knowledge from his creatures; he knows all things in himself. And thus his knowledge is more noble, and of a higher elevation than ours, or the knowledge of any creature can be; he knows all things by one comprehension of the causes in himself.

Proposition II. God knows all things *by one act of intuition.* This the schools call an intuitive knowledge. This follows upon the other; for if he know by his own essence, he knows all things by one act, there would be otherwise a division in his essence, a first and a last, a nearness and a distance. As what he made, he made by one word; so what he sees, he pierceth into by one glance from eternity to eternity; as he wills all things by one act of his will, so he knows all things by one act of his understanding; he knows not some things discursively from other things, nor knows one thing successively after another. As by one act he imparts essence to things; so by one act he knows the nature of things.

* Kendal against Goodwin of Fore-knowledge.

He does not know by discourse, *as we do.* That is, by deducing one thing from another, and from common notions drawing out other rational conclusions, and arguing one thing from another, and springing up various consequences from some principle assented to; but God stands in no need of reasonings; the making inferences and abstracting things would be stains in the infinite perfection of God; here would be a mixture of knowledge and ignorance; while he knew the principle, he would not know the consequence and conclusion till he had actually deduced it; one thing would be known after another, and so he would have ignorance and then knowledge; and there would be different conceptions in God, and knowledge would be multiplied according to the multitude of objects; as it is in human understandings. But God knows all things before they existed, and never was ignorant of them, *Acts* 15. 18. *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.* He therefore knows them all at once; the knowledge of one thing was not before another, nor depended upon another, as in human reasoning.

*Though indeed some make a virtual discourse in God; that is, though God hath a simple knowledge, yet it virtually contains a discourse by the flowing of one knowledge from another; as from the knowledge of his own power, he knows what things are possible to be made by him; and from the knowledge of himself, he passes to the knowledge of the creatures; but this is only according to our conception, and because of our weakness they are apprehended as two distinct acts in God, one of which is the reason of another: as we say that one attribute is the reason of another; as his mercy may be said to be the reason of his patience; and his omnipresence to be the reason of the knowledge of present things done in the world. God indeed by one simple act, knows himself and the creatures; but when that act whereby he knows himself is conceived by us to pass to the knowledge of the creatures, we must not understand

* Suarez. vol. 1. de Deo, lib. 3. cap. 2. p. 133, 134.

it to be a new act, distinct from the other; but the same act upon different terms or objects; such an order is in our understandings and conceptions, not in God's.

Nor does he know *successively* as we do. That is, not by drops, one thing after another. This follows from the former; a knowledge of all things without discourse is knowledge without succession. *The knowledge of one thing is not in God before another, one act of knowledge does not forget another; in regard of the objects, one thing is before another, one year before another, one generation of men before another, one is the cause, the other is the effect: in the creatures there is such a succession, and God knows there will be such a succession; but there is no such order in God's knowledge; for he knows all those successions by one glance, without any succession of knowledge in himself.

Man in his view of things must turn sometimes his body, sometimes only his eyes; he cannot see all the contents of a letter at once, and though he beholds all the lines in the page of a book at once, and a whole country in a map, yet to know what is contained in them, he must turn his eye from word to word, and line to line, and so spin out one thing after another by several acts and motions. We behold a great part of the sea at once,† but not all the dimensions of it; for to know the length of the sea we move our eyes one way; to see the breadth of it, we turn our eyes another way; to behold the depth of it, we have another motion of them. And when we cast our eyes up to heaven, we seem to receive in at an instant the whole extent of the hemisphere; yet there is but one object the eye can attentively pitch upon, and we cannot distinctly view what we see in a lump, without various motions of our eyes, which is not done without succession of time.‡ And certainly the understanding of angels is bounded, according to the measure of their beings; so that it cannot extend itself at one time to a quantity of objects, to make a distinct appli-

* Gamach in Aquin. q. 14. cap. I. p. 119.

† Saith Epiphanius. ‡ Amyrant morale chresti. Tom. 3. p. 137.

cation of them, but the objects must present themselves one by one. But God is all eye, all understanding; as there is no succession in his essence, so there is none in his knowledge; *his understanding* in the nature, and in the act, *is infinite*, as it is in the text.

He therefore sees eternally and universally all things, by one act, without any motion, much less various motions; the various changes of things, in their substance, qualities, places, and relations, withdraw not any thing from his eye, nor bring any new thing to his knowledge; he doth not upon consideration of present things turn his mind from past; or when he beholds future things, turn his mind from present; but he sees them not one after another, but all at once and all together; the whole circle of his own counsels, and all the various lines drawn forth from the centre of his will, to the circumference of his creatures; just as if a man were able in one moment to read a whole library; or as if you should imagine a transparent chrystal globe hung up in the midst of a room, and so framed as to take in the images of all things in the room, the fret-work in the cieling, the inlaid parts of the floor, and the particular parts of the tapestry about it, the eye of a man would behold all the beauty of the room at once. As the sun by one light and heat frames sensible things; so God by one simple act knows all things. As he knows mutable things by an immutable knowledge, bodily things by a spiritual knowledge; so he knows many things by one knowledge, *Heb.* 4. 13, *All things are open and naked to him*, more than any one thing can be to us; and therefore he views all things at once, as well as we can behold and contemplate one thing alone. As he is the *Father of lights*, a God of infinite understanding, there is *no variableness in his mind, nor any shadow of turning* of his eye, as there is of ours, to behold various things, *James* 1. 17. His knowledge being eternal, includes all times; there is nothing past or future with him, and therefore he beholds all things by one and the same manner of knowledge, and comprehends all knowable things by one act, and in one moment. This must needs be so,

1. Because of the *eminency* of God. God is above all, and therefore cannot but see the motions of all. He that sits in a theatre, or at the top of a place, sees all things, all persons, by one aspect he comprehends the whole circle of the place; whereas he that that sits below, when he looks before he cannot see things behind; God being above all, about all, in all, sees at once the motions of all. The whole world in the eye of God is less than a point that divides one sentence from another in a book; as a cypher, *a grain of dust*, *Isa.* 40. 15. So little a thing can be seen by man at once; and all things being as little in the eye of God, are seen at once by him. As all time is but a moment to his eternity; so all things are but as a point to the immensity of his knowledge, which he can behold with more ease than we can move or turn our eye.

2. Because *all the perfections of knowing* are *united* in God. * As particular senses are divided in man, by one he sees, by another he hears, by another he smells, yet all those are united in one common sense, and this common sense apprehends all; so the various and distinct ways of knowledge in the creatures are all eminently united in God. A man when he sees a grain of wheat, understands at once all things that can in time proceed from that seed; so God by beholding his own virtue and power, beholds all things which shall in time be unfolded by him. We have a shadow of this way of knowledge in our own understanding; the sense only perceives a thing present, and one object only proper and suitable to it; as the eye sees colour, the ear hears sounds; we see this and that man, one time this, another minute that; but the understanding abstracts a notion of the common nature of man, and frames a conception of that nature wherein all men agree; and so in a manner beholds and understands all men at once, by understanding the common nature of man, which is a degree of knowledge above the sense and fancy; we may then conceive an infinite vaster perfection in the understanding of God. As to know is

* Cusan. p. 646.

simply better than not to know at all; so to know by one act comprehensive, is a greater perfection than to know by divided acts, by succession to receive information, and to have an increase or decrease of knowledge, to be like a bucket, always descending into the well, and fetching water from thence. It is a man's weakness that he is fixed on one object only at a time; it is God's perfection that he can behold all at once, and is fixed upon no one more than upon another.

Proposition III. God knows all things *independently.* This is essential to an infinite understanding. He receives not his knowledge from any thing without him, he hath no tutor to instruct him, or book to inform him; *who hath been his counsellor?* saith the prophet, *Isa.* 40. 13. He hath no need of the counsels of others, nor of the instructions of others. This follows upon the first and second propositions; if he knows things by his essence, then as his essence is independent from the creatures, so is his knowledge; he borrows not any images from the creature, hath no species or pictures of things in his understanding, as we have; no beams from the creature strike upon him to enlighten him, but beams from him upon the world; the earth sends not light to the sun, but the sun to the earth. Our knowledge indeed depends upon the object; but all created objects depend upon God's knowledge and will: we could not know creatures unless they were; but creatures could not be unless God knew them. As nothing that he wills is the cause of his will; so nothing that he knows is the cause of his knowledge; he did not make things to know them, but he knows them to make them; who will imagine that the mark of the foot in the dust is the cause that the foot stands in this or that particular place?

If his knowledge did depend upon the things, then the existence of things preceded God's knowledge of them; to say that they are the cause of God's knowledge, is to say that God was not the cause of their being; and if he did create them, it was effected by a blind and ignorant power, he created he knew not what till he had produced it. If he be beholden for his knowledge to the creatures he hath made, he had then no knowledge of

them before he made them. If his knowledge were dependent upon them, it could not be eternal, but must have a beginning when the creatures had a beginning, and be of no longer date than since the nature of things was in actual existence: for whatsoever is a cause of knowledge, doth precede the knowledge it causes, either in order of time, or order of nature; temporal things therefore cannot be the cause of that knowledge which is eternal. His works could not be foreknown to him, if his knowledge commenced with the existence of his works, if he knew them before he made them, he could not derive knowledge from them after they were made. He made all things *in wisdom*, *Psa.* 104. 24. How can this be imagined, if the things known were the cause of his knowledge, and so before his knowledge, and therefore before his action? * God would not then be the first in the order of knowing agents, because he would not act by knowledge, but act before he knew, and know after he had acted, and so the creature which he made would be before the act of his understanding, whereby he knew what he made.

Again, since knowledge is a perfection, if God's knowledge of the creatures depended upon the creatures, he would derive an excellency from them, they would derive no excellency from any idea in the divine mind; he would not be infinitely perfect in himself; if his perfection in knowledge were gained from any thing without himself and below himself, he would not be sufficient of himself, but be under an indigence, which wanted a supply from the things he had made; and could not be eternally perfect till he had created, and seen the effects of his own power, goodness, and wisdom, to render him more wise and knowing in time than he was from eternity; who can fancy such a God as this without destroying the Deity he pretends to adore? For if his understanding be perfected by something without him, why may not his essence be perfected by something without him; that as he was made *knowing by* something without him, he might he made *God* by something without him?

* Bradward, lib. 1. cap. 15.

How could his understanding be infinite, if it depended upon a finite object, as upon a cause? Is the majesty of God to be debased to a mendicant condition, to seek for a supply from things inferior to himself? Is it to be imagined that a fool, a toad, a fly should be assistant to the knowledge of God? that the most noble being should be perfected by things so vile, that the supreme cause of all things should receive any addition of knowledge, and be determined in his understanding by the notion of things so mean? To conclude this particular. All things depend upon his knowledge, his knowledge depends upon nothing, but is as independent as himself and his own essence.

Proposition IV. God knows all things *distinctly.* His understanding is infinite in regard of clearness; *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all, John* 1. 5. He sees not through a mist or cloud; there is no blemish in his understanding, no mote or beam in his eye, to render any thing obscure to him. Man discerns the surface and outside of things, little or nothing of the essence of things; we see the noblest things but *as in a glass darkly,* 1 *Cor.* 13. 12. The too great nearness, as well as the too great distance of a thing, hinders our sight; the smallness of a mote escapes our eye, and so our knowledge; also the weakness of our understanding is troubled with the multitude of things, and cannot know many things but confusedly. But God knows the forms and essence of things, every circumstance; nothing is so deep, but he sees to the bottom; he sees the mass, and sees the motes of beings; his understanding being infinite, is not offended with a multitude of things, or distracted with the variety of them; he discerns every thing infinitely more clearly and perfectly than Adam or Solomon could any one thing in the circle of their knowledge: what knowledge they had was from him; he hath therefore infinitely a more perfect knowledge than they were capable in their natures to receive a communication of. All things are *open to him, Heb.* 4. 13. The least fibre in its nakedness and distinct frame is transparent to him; as by the help of glasses, the mouth, feet, hands of a small insect are visi-

ble to a man, which seem to the eye, without that assistance, one entire piece, not diversified into parts. All the causes, qualities, natures, properties of things are open to him, *he brings out the host of heaven by number, and calleth them by names, Isa.* 40. 26. He numbers the hairs of our heads; what more distinct than number? Thus God beholds things in every unity, which makes up the heap: he knows, and none else can, every thing in its true and intimate causes, in its original and intermediate causes; in himself, as the cause of every particular of their being, every property in their being.

Knowledge by the causes is the most noble and perfect knowledge, and most suited to the infinite excellency of the divine Being; he created all things, and ordered them to a universal and particular end; he therefore knows the essential properties of every thing, every activity of their nature, all their fitness for those distinct ends to which he orders them, and for which he governs and disposeth them; and understands their darkest and most hidden qualities infinitely clearer than any eye can behold the clear beams of the sun. He knows all things as he made them; he made them distinctly, and therefore knows them distinctly, and that every individual; therefore God is said, *to see every thing that he hath made, Gen.* 1. 31; he took a review of every particular creature he had made, and upon his view pronounced it good. To pronounce that good which was not exactly known in every creek, in every mite of its nature, had not consisted with his veracity; for every one that speaks truth ignorantly, that knows not that he speaks truth, is a liar in speaking that which is true.

God knows every act of his own will, whether it be positive or permissive, and therefore every effect of his will. We must needs ascribe to God a perfect knowledge; but a confused knowledge cannot challenge that title. To know things only in a heap is unworthy of the divine perfection; for if God knows his own ends in the creation of things, he knows distinctly the means whereby he will bring them to those ends for which he hath appointed them. No wise man intends an end,

without a knowledge of the means conducing to that end; an ignorance then of any thing in the world, which falls under the nature of a means to a divine end, (and there is nothing in the world but doth), would be inconsistent with the perfection of God; it would ascribe to him a blind providence in the world. As there can be nothing imperfect in his being and essence, so there can be nothing imperfect in his understanding and knowledge; and therefore not a confused knowledge, which is an imperfection. *Darkness and light are both alike to him, Psal.* 139. 12. He sees distinctly into the one as well as the other; what is darkness to us, is not so to him.

Proposition V. God knows all things *infallibly.* His understanding is infinite in regard of certainty; every tittle of what he knows is as far from failing as what he speaks; our Saviour affirms the one, *Matt.* 5. 18. And there is the same reason of the certainty of one as well as the other; his essence is the measure of his knowledge; whence it is as impossible that God should be mistaken in the knowledge of the least thing in the world, as it is that he should be mistaken in his own essence; for knowing himself comprehensively, he must know all other things infallibly, since he is essentially omniscient, he is no more capable of error in his understanding than of imperfection in his essence; his counsels are as unerring as his essence is perfect, and his knowledge as infallible as his essence is free from defect.

Again, since God knows all things with a *knowledge of vision,* because he wills them; his knowledge must be as infallible as his purpose; now his purpose will certainly be effected; *what he hath thought shall come to pass, and what he hath purposed shall stand, Isa.* 14. 24. *His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure, Isa.* 46. 10. There may be interruptions of nature, the foundations of it may be out of course, but there can be no bar upon the Author of nature; he hath an infinite power to carry on and perfect the resolves of his own will; he can effect what he pleases by a word. Speech is one of the least motions; yet when God said, *let there be light, there was light* arising from darkness. No reason can be given

why God knows a thing to be, but because he infallibly wills it to be.

Again, * the schools make this difference between the knowledge of the good and bad angels, that the good are never deceived; for that is repugnant to their blessed state; for deceit is an evil and an imperfection, inconsistent with that perfect blessedness the good angels are possessed of; and would it not much more be a stain upon the blessedness of that God that is blessed for ever, to be subject to deceit? His knowledge therefore is not an opinion, for an opinion is uncertain; a man knows not what to think, but leans to one part of the question proposed, rather than to the other. If things did not come to pass therefore as God knows them, his knowledge would be imperfect; and since he knows by his essence, his essence also would be imperfect, if God were exposed to any deceit in his knowledge; he knows by himself, who is the highest truth; and therefore it is impossible he should err in his understanding.

Proposition 6. God knows *immutably*. His understanding else could not be infinite; every thing and every act that is mutable is finite, it hath its bounds; for there is a term from which it changeth, and a term to which it changes. † There is a change in the understanding when we gain the knowledge of a thing which was unknown to us before; or when we actually consider a thing which we did not know before, though we had the principles of the knowledge of it; or when we know that distinctly which we before knew confusedly. None of these can be ascribed to God, without a manifest disparagement of his infinity: our knowledge indeed is always arriving to us or flowing from us; we pass from one degree to another, from worse to better, or from better to worse; but God loses nothing by the ages that are run, nor will gain any thing by the ages that are to come. If there were a variation in the knowledge of God, by the daily and hourly changes in the world, he

* Suaez. Vol. 2. p. 228.

† Tileni Syntagina Part. 1. Disp. 13. Thes. 13.

would grow wiser than he was, he was not then perfectly wise before. A change in the objects known, infers not any change in the understanding exercised about them; the wheel moves round, the spokes that are lowest are presently highest, and presently return to be low again; but the eye that beholds them changes not with the motion of the wheels. God's knowledge admits no more of increase or decrease than his essence; since God knows by his essence, and the essence of God is God himself, his knowledge must be void of any change.

The knowledge of possible things arising from the knowledge of his own power cannot be changed, unless his power be changed, and God become weak and impotent; the knowledge of future things cannot be changed, because that knowledge ariseth from his will, which is irreversible, *the counsel of the Lord that shall stand, Prov.* 19. 21. So that if God can never decay into weakness, and never turn to inconstancy, there can be no variation of his knowledge. He knows what he can do, and he knows what he will do, and both these being immutable, his knowledge must consequently be so too. It was not necessary that this or that creature should be, and therefore it was not necessary that God should know this or that creature with a knowledge of vision; but after the will of God had determined the existence of this or that creature, his knowledge being then determined to this or that object, did necessarily continue unchangeable. God therefore knows no more now than he did before; and at the end of the world he shall know no more than he doth now; and from eternity he knows no less than he doth now, and shall do to eternity. Though things pass into being and out of being, the knowledge of God doth not vary with them, for he knows them as well before they were as when they are; and knows them as well when they are past as when they are present.

Proposition 7. God knows all things *perpetually*, i. e. in act. Since he knows by his essence, he always knows, because his essence never ceaseth, but is a pure act; so that he doth not know only in habit, but in act. Men

that have the knowledge of some art or science, have it always in habit, though when they are asleep they have it not in act. A musician hath the habit of music, but doth not so much as think of it when his senses are bound up. But God is *an unsleepy eye*,* he never slumbers nor sleeps; he never slumbers in regard of his providence, and therefore never slumbers in regard of his knowledge. He knows not himself nor any other creature more perfectly at one time than at another; he is perpetually in the act of knowing, as the sun is in the act of shining; the sun never ceased to shine in one or other part of the world since it was first fixed in the heavens; nor God to be in the act of knowledge since he was God; and therefore since he always was and always will be God, he always was and always will be in the act of knowledge; always knowing his own essence, he must always actually know what hath been gone and ceased from being, and what shall come and arise into being.

As a watch-maker knows what watch he intends to make; and after he hath made it, though it be broken to pieces or consumed by the fire, he still knows it, because he knows the copy of it in his own mind. Some therefore in regard of this perpetual act of the divine knowledge, have called God not *intellectus*, but the *intellection of intellections;* we have no proper English word to express the act of the understanding; as his power is co-eternal with him, so his knowledge; all times past, present, and to come, are embraced in the bosom of his understanding; he fixed all things in their seasons, that nothing new comes to him, nothing old passes from him.† What is done in a thousand years is as actually present with his knowledge, as what is done in one day, or in one watch in the night, is with ours; since *a thousand years are no more to God than a day or a watch in the night is to us, Psal.* 90. 4. God is in the highest degree of being, and therefore in the highest degree of understanding. Knowledge is one of the

* Plato, ἀκείμη τος ὀφθαλμὸς. † Damianus.

most perfect acts in any creature. God therefore hath all actual, as well as essential and habitual knowledge, *his understanding is infinite.*

IV. The fourth general is *reasons* to prove this.

Reason 1. *God must know what any creature knows,* and *more than any creature knows.* There is nothing done in the world, but is known by some creature or other; every action is at least known by the person that acts, and therefore known by the Creator, who cannot be exceeded by any of the creatures, or all of them together; and every creature is known by him, since every creature is made by him. * And as God works all things by an infinite power, so he knows all things by an infinite understanding.

1. The *perfection of God requires this.* † All perfections that include no essential defect are formally in God; but knowledge includes no essential defect in itself, therefore it is in God. Knowledge in itself is desirable, and an excellency; ignorance is a defect; it is impossible that the least grain of defect can be found in the most perfect being. Since God is wise he must be knowing; for wisdom must have knowledge for the basis of it; a creature can no more be wise without knowledge than he can be active without strength. Now God is *only wise.* And therefore only knowing in the highest degree of knowledge, incomprehensibly beyond all degrees of knowledge, because infinite. Again, the more spiritual any thing is, the more understanding it is. The dull body understands nothing; sense perceives, but the understanding faculty is seated in the soul, which is of a spiritual nature, which knows things that are present, remembers things that are past, foresees many things to come. What is the property of a spiritual nature, must be in a most eminent manner in the supreme spirit of the world, that is in the highest degree of spirituality, and most remote from any matter.

Again, nothing can enjoy other things, but by some kind of understanding them; God hath the highest en-

* Gerhard. † Gamach in 1. part. Aquin. q. 14. cap. 1. p. 118, 119.

joyment of himself, of all things he hath created, of all the glory that accrues to him by them; nothing of perfection and blessedness can be wanting to him. Felicity doth not consist with ignorance, and all imperfect knowledge is a degree of ignorance: God therefore perfectly knows himself, and all things from whence he designs any glory to himself. The most noble manner of acting must be ascribed to God as being the most noble and excellent being; to act by knowledge is the most excellent manner of acting, God hath therefore not only knowledge, but the most excellent manner of knowledge; for as it is better to know than to be ignorant, so it is better to know in the most excellent manner than to have a mean and low kind of knowledge; his knowledge therefore must be every way as perfect as his essence, infinite as well as that. An infinite nature must have an infinite knowledge: a God ignorant of any thing cannot be counted infinite, for he is not infinite to whom any degree of perfection is wanting.

2. All the knowledge in any creature is *from God.* And you must allow God a greater and more perfect knowledge than any creature hath, yea, than all creatures have. All the drops of knowledge any creature hath come from God; and all the knowledge in every creature that ever was, is, or shall be in the whole mass, was derived from him. If all those several drops in particular creatures were collected into one spirit, into one creature, it would be an unconceivable knowledge, yet still lower than what the author of all that knowledge hath; for God cannot give more knowledge than he hath himself; nor is the creature capable of receiving so much knowledge as God hath. As the creature is incapable of receiving so much power as God hath, for then it would be almighty; so it is incapable of receiving so much knowledge as God hath, for then it would be God. Nothing can be made by God equal to himself in any thing; if any thing could be made as knowing as God, it would be eternal as God, it would be the cause of all things as God. The knowledge that we poor worms have, is an argument God uses for asserting the greatness of his own knowledge,

He that teaches man knowledge, shall not he know? Psal. 94. 10. Man hath here knowledge ascribed to him, the author of this knowledge is God, he furnished him with it, and therefore in a higher manner possesses it; and much more than can fall under the comprehension of any creature; as the sun enlightens all things, but hath more light in itself than it darts upon the earth or the heavens; and shall not God eminently contain all that knowledge he imparts to the creatures, and infinitely more exact and comprehensive?

3. The *accusations of conscience* evidence God's knowledge of all actions of all his creatures. Doth not conscience check for the most secret sins, to which none are privy but a man's self; the whole world beside being ignorant of his crime? Do not the fears of another judge gall the heart? If a judgment above him be feared, an understanding above him discerning their secrets is confessed by those fears; whence can those horrors arise, if there be not a superior that understands and records the crime? What perfection of the divine Being can this relate to but omniscience? What other attribute is to be feared, if God were defective in this? The condemnation of us by our own hearts, when none in the world can condemn us, renders it legible, that there *is one greater than our hearts*, in respect of knowledge, who *knows all things.* 1 *John* 3. 20. Conscience would be a vain principle, and stingless without this; it would be an easy matter to silence all its accusations, and mockingly laugh in the face of its severest frowns. What need any trouble themselves if none knows their crimes but themselves? Concealed sins, knawing the conscience, are arguments of God's omniscience of all present and past actions.

4. God is *the first cause of every thing*, every creature is his production. Since all creatures, from the highest angel to the lowest worm, exist by the power of God; if God understands his own power and excellency, nothing can be hid from him, that was brought forth by that power, as well as nothing can be unknown to him, that that power is able to pro-

duce. * If God knows nothing besides himself, he may then believe there is nothing besides himself; we shall then fancy a God miserably mistaken: if he knows nothing besides himself, then things were not created by him, or not understandingly and voluntarily created, but dropped from him before he was aware. To think that the first cause of all should be ignorant of those things he is the cause of, is to make him not a voluntary, but natural agent, and therefore necessary; and then that the creature came from him as light from the sun, and moisture from the water; this would be an absurd opinion of the world's creation; if God be a voluntary agent, as he is, he must be an intelligent agent. The faculty of will is not in any creature, without that of understanding also: if God be an intelligent agent, his knowledge must extend as far as his operation, and every object of his operation, unless we imagine God hath lost his memory, in that long tract of time since the first creation of them. An artificer cannot be ignorant of his own work: If God knows himself, he knows himself to be a cause; how can he know himself to be a cause unless he know the effects of which he is the cause: one relation implies another; a man cannot know himself to be a father unless he hath a child, because it is a name of relation, and in the notion of it refers to another. The name of cause is a name of relation, and implies an effect; if God therefore know himself in all his perfections, as the cause of things, he must know all his acts, what his wisdom contrived, what his counsel determined, and what his power effected.

The knowledge of God is to be supposed in a free determination of himself; and that knowledge must be perfect, both of the object, act, and all the circumstances of it. How can his will freely produce any thing that was not first known in his understanding? From this the prophet argues the understanding of God, and the unsearchableness of it, because he is the *Creator of the ends of the earth*, *Isa.* 40. 28, and the same reason David gives of God's knowledge of him, and of every thing he

* Bradwardin. p. 6.

did, and that *afar off*, because he was *formed by him*, *Psal.* 139. 2, 15, 16. As the perfect making of things only belongs to God; so does the perfect knowledge of things; it is absurd to think that God should be ignorant of what he hath given being to; that he should not know all the creatures and their qualities, the plants and their virtues; as that a man should not know the letters that are formed by him in writing. Every thing bears in itself the mark of God's perfections; and shall not God know the representation of his own virtue?

5. Without this knowledge, *God could no more be the Governor, than he could be the Creator of the world.* Knowledge is the basis of providence; to know things, is before the government of things; a practical knowledge cannot be without a theoretical knowledge. Nothing could be directed to its proper end without the knowledge of the nature of it, and its suitableness to answer that end for which it is intended. As every thing, even the minutest, falls under the conduct of God, so every thing falls under the knowledge of God. A blind coachman is not able to hold the reins of his horses, and direct them in the right paths: since the providence of God is about particulars, his knowledge must be about particulars; he could not else govern them in particular; nor could all things be said to depend upon him in their being and operations. Providence depends upon the knowledge of God, and the exercise of it upon the goodness of God; it cannot be without understanding and will; understanding to know what is convenient, and will to perform it. When our Saviour therefore speaks of providence, he intimates these two in a special manner, *your heavenly Father knows that you have need of these things, Mat.* 6. 32, *and goodness,* in *Luke* 11. 13. The reason of providence is so joined with omniscience, that they cannot be separated: What kind of a God would he be that were ignorant of those things that were governed by him? The ascribing this perfection to him asserts his providence; for it is as easy for one that knows all things, to look over the whole world, if written with

monosyllables, in every little particular of it, as it is with a man to take a view of one letter in an alphabet.

* Again, if God were not omniscient, how could he reward the good, and punish the evil? The works of men are either rewardable or punishable; not only according to their outward circumstances, but inward principles and ends, and the degrees of venom lurking in the heart. The exact discerning of these, without a possibility to be deceived, is necessary to pass a right and infallible judgment upon them, and proportion the censure and punishment to the crime. Without such a knowledge and discerning, men would not have their due; nay, a judgment just for the matter would be unjust in the manner, because unjustly passed, without an understanding of the merit of the cause. It is necessary therefore that the Supreme Judge of the world should not be thought to be blindfold, when he distributes his rewards and punishments, and muffle his face when he passes his sentence. It is necessary to ascribe to him the knowledge of men's thoughts and intentions; the secret wills and aims; the hidden works of darkness in every man's conscience, because every man's work is to be measured by the will and inward frame. It is necessary that he should perpetually retain all those things in the indelible and plain records of his memory, that there may not be any work without a just proportion of what is due to it. This is the glory of God to discover the secrets of all hearts at last, as 1 *Cor.* 4. 5, *The Lord shall bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of all hearts, and then shall every man have praise of God.* This knowledge fits him to be a judge; the reason why the *ungodly shall not stand in judgment*, is because God knows their ways, which is implied in his *knowing the way of the righteous, Psal.* 1. 5, 6.

* Sabund Tit. 84. much changed.

PART V.

IMPROVEMENT FOR INSTRUCTION.—INFERENCES DEDUCED FROM THE INFINITE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

Jesus not a mere creature—Perfectly knows the Father—Knows all creatures—Providence of God over all things—Certainty of a final judgment—The ground of faith in a resurrection—Justification in the sight of God—The perfections of God excite high thoughts of him—Low thoughts of self—How much this attribute of infinite knowledge is impaired—By invading its rights—By presuming upon it—By practical denial of it.

FIRST, Jesus Christ is *not a mere creature.* The two titles of *wonderful Counsellor* and *mighty God,* are given him in conjunction, *Isa.* 9. 6, not only the *angel of the covenant*, as he is called, *Malach.* 3. 1, or the executor of his counsels, but a counsellor, in conjunction with him in counsel as well as power. This title is superior to any title given to any of the prophets in regard of their predictions; and therefore I should take it rather as the note of his perfect understanding, than of his perfect teaching and discovering, as Calvin does. He is not only the revealer of what he knows, for so were the prophets according to their measures; but the counsellor of what he revealed, having a perfect understanding of all the counsels of God, as being interested in them as the Mighty God. He calls himself by the peculiar title of God, and declares

that he will manifest himself by this prerogative to all the churches, *And all the churches shall know that I am he which searches the reins and hearts*, *Rev.* 2. 23, the most hidden operations of the minds of men that lie locked up from the view of all the world besides. And this was no new thing to him after his ascension; for the same perfection he had in the time of his earthly flesh, *he knew their thoughts; Luke* 6. 8, his eyes are therefore compared to *doves eyes*, *Cant.* 5. 12, which are clear and quick; and to *a flame of fire*, *Rev.* 1. 14, not only heat to consume his enemies, but light to discern their contrivances against the church; he pierceth by his knowledge into all parts, as fire pierceth into the closest particle of iron, and separates between the most united parts of metals; and some tell us he is called a roe, from the perspicacacity of his sight, as well as from the swiftness of his motion.

He hath a perfect knowledge of *the Father;* he knows the Father, and none else knows the Father; angels know God, men know God, but Christ in a peculiar manner knows the Father; *no man knows the Son but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son*, *Mat.* 11. 27. He knows so as that he learns not from any other; he perfectly comprehends him, which is beyond the reach of any creature, with the addition of all the divine virtue; not because of any incapacity in God to reveal, but the incapacity of the creature to receive; finite is incapable of being made infinite, and therefore incapable of comprehending infinity; so that Christ cannot be *Deus factus*, made of a creature a God, to comprehend God; for then of finite he would become infinite, which is a contradiction. As the Spirit is God, because *he searches the deep things of God*, that is, comprehends them*, as the spirit of a man doth the things of a man, so the Spirit of God understands what is in the understanding of God, and what is in the will of God. He hath an absolute knowledge ascribed to him, and such as could not be ascribed to any thing but divinity: now if the Spirit knows the deep

* Petav, Theo. dogmat. Tom. 1. p. 467, &c.

things of God, and takes from Christ what he shews to us of him, *John* 16. 15, he cannot be ignorant of those things himself; he must know the depths of God that affords us that Spirit, that is not ignorant of any of the counsels of the Father's will; since he comprehends the Father, and the Father him, he is in himself infinite; for God whose essence is infinite, is infinitely knowable; but no created understanding can infinitely know God. The infinity of the object hinders it from being understood by any thing that is not infinite. Though a creature should understand all the works of God, yet it cannot be therefore said to understand God himself: As though I may understand all the volitions and motions of my soul, yet it does not follow that therefore I understand the whole nature and substance of my soul; or if a man understood all the effects of the sun, that therefore he understands fully the nature of the sun. But Christ knows the Father, he lay in the *bosom of the Father*, was in the greatest intimacy with him, *John* 1. 18, and from this intimacy with him, he saw him and knew him; so he knows God as much as he is knowable; and therefore knows him perfectly as the Father knows himself by a comprehensive vision; this is the knowledge of God, wherein properly the infinity of his understanding appears: and our Saviour uses such expressions which manifest his knowledge to be above all created knowledge, and such a manner of knowledge of the Father as the Father hath of him.

Christ knows *all creatures*. That knowledge which comprehends God, comprehends all created things as they are in God; it is a knowledge that sinks to the depths of his will, and therefore extends to all the acts of his will in creation and providence; by knowing the Father he knows all things that are contained in the virtue, power, and will of God; *whatsoever the Father doth, that the Son doth*, *John* 5. 19. As the Father therefore knows all things he is the cause of, so the Son knows all things he is the worker of; as the perfect making of all things belongs to both, so doth the perfect knowledge of all things belong to both; where the action is the same, the knowledge is the same. Now the Father did not create one

thing, and Christ another; *but all things were created by him, and for him: all things both in heaven and earth*, *Col.* 1. 16. As he knows himself the cause of all things, and the end of all things, he cannot be ignorant of all things that were effected by him, and are referred to him; he knows all creatures in God, as he knows the essence of God, and knows all creatures in themselves, as he knows his own acts and the fruits of his power; those things must be in his knowledge that were in his power, *all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge* of God are *hid in him*, *Col.* 2. 3. Now it is not the wisdom of God to know in part and be in part ignorant. He cannot be ignorant of any thing, since there is *nothing but what was made by him*, and since it is less to know than create; for we know many things which we cannot make. If he be the Creator, he cannot but be the discerner of what he made; this is a part of wisdom belonging to an artificer to know the nature and quality of what he makes.* Since he cannot be ignorant of what he furnished with being, and with various endowments, he must know them not only universally, but particularly.

Christ knows *the hearts and affections of men.* Peter scruples not to ascribe to him this knowledge, among the knowledge of all other things, *John* 21. 17, *Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.* From Christ's knowledge of all things, he concludes his knowledge of the inward frames and dispositions of men. To search the heart, is the sole prerogative of God, 1 *Kings* 8. 39. *For thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men:* Shall we take only here with a limitation, as some that are no friends to the Deity of Christ would, and say, God only knows the hearts of men from himself, and by his own infinite virtue? Why may we not take *only* in other places with a limitation, and make nonsense of it, as *Psal.* 86. 10, *Thou art God alone.* Is it to be understood, that God is God alone from himself, but other gods may be made by him, and so there may be numberless infinites? As God is God alone, so

* Petav. Theolo. Dogmat. tom. 1. p. 467.

that none can be God but himself; so he alone knows all the hearts of all the children of men, and none but he can know them; this knowledge is from his nature.

*The reason why God knows the hearts of men, is rendered in the Scripture double, because he created them, and because he is *present every where*, these two are by the confession of christians and pagans universally received as the proper characters of divinity whereby the Deity is distinguished from all creatures. Now when Christ ascribes this to himself, and that with such an emphasis, that nothing greater than that could be urged, as he doth, *Rev. 2. 23*, we must conclude that he is of the same essence with God, one with him in his nature, as well as one with him in his attributes. God only knows the hearts of the children of men; there is the *unity* of God: Christ searches the hearts and reins; there is a *distinction of persons* in an oneness of essence; he knows the hearts of all men, not only of those that were with him in the time of the flesh, that have been, and shall be, since his ascension, but of those that lived and died before his coming, because he is to be the judge of all that lived before his humiliation on earth, as well as after his exaltation in heaven. It pertains to him as a judge, to know distinctly the merits of the cause of which he is to judge; and this excellency of searching the hearts is mentioned by himself with relation to his judicial proceeding, *I will give to every one of you according to your works.* And though a creature may know what is in a man's heart, if it be revealed to him, yet such a knowledge is a knowledge only by report, not by inspection; yet this latter is ascribed to Christ, *He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man; John 2. 24. 25*, he looked into their hearts.

The Evangelist to allay the amazement of men at his relation of our Saviour's knowledge of the inward falsity of those that made a splendid profession of him, doth not say, the Father revealed it to him; but intimates it to be an inseparable property of his nature. No covering was so thick as to bound his eye; no pretence so glittering as to im-

* Placens de deitate Christi.

pose upon his understanding. Those that made a profession of him, and could not be discerned by the eye of man from his faithfullest attendants, were in their inside known to him plainer than their outside was to others; and therefore he committed not himself to them, though they seemed to be persuaded to a real belief in his name, because of the power of his miracles; and were touched with an admiration of him, as some great prophet, and perhaps declared him to be the Messiah, ver. 23.

He had a foreknowledge of *the particular inclinations of men, before those distinct inclinations were in actual being* in them. This is plainly asserted, *John* 6. 64. *But there are some of you that believe not, for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.* When Christ assured them from the knowledge of the hearts of his followers, that some of them were void of that faith they professed; the Evangelist to stop their amazement, that Christ should have such a power, adds, that he *knew from the beginning*, that he had not only a present knowledge, but a foreknowledge of every one's inclination; he knew not only now and then what was in the hearts of his disciples, but from the beginning of any one's giving up their names to him; he knew whether it were a pretence or sincere, he knew who should betray him, and there was no man's inward affection but was foreseen by him. *From the beginning*, whether we understand it from the beginning of the world, as when Christ saith concerning divorces, *from the beginning it was not so*, that is from the beginning of the world, from the beginning of the law of nature; or from the beginning of their attending him; as it is taken, *Luke* 1. 2, he had a certain prescience of the inward dispositions of men's hearts, and their succeeding sentiments; he foreknew the treacherous heart of Judas in the midst of his splendid profession; and discerned his resolution in the root, and his thought in the confused chaos of his natural corruption; he knew how it would spring up, before it did spring up, before Judas had any distinct and formal conception of it himself, or before there was any actual preparation to a resolve. Peter's denial was not unknown to him, when Peter had a present resolu-

tion, and no question spake it in the present sincerity of his soul, *never to forsake him;* he foreknew what would be the result of that poison which lurked in Peter's nature, before Peter himself imagined any thing of it; he discerned Peter's apostatizing heart, when Peter resolved the contrary; our Saviour's prediction was accomplished, and Peter's valiant resolution languished into cowardice. Shall we then conclude our blessed Saviour a creature, who perfectly and only knew the Father, who knew all creatures, who had all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, who knew the inward motions of men's hearts by his own virtue, and had not only a present knowledge, but a prescience of them.

The second instruction from this position, is, that God hath an infinite knowledge and understanding. Then there is a *providence exercised by God in the world, and that about every thing.* As providence infers omniscience as the guide of it; so omniscience infers providence as the end of it. What exercise would there be of this attribute, but in the government of the world? To this infinite perfection refers, *Jer.* 17. 10, *I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.* He searches the heart to reward, he rewards every man according to the rewardableness of his actions; his government therefore extends to every man in the world; there is no heart but he searches, therefore no heart but he governs; to what purpose else would be this knowledge of all his creatures? For a mere contemplation of them? No, what pleasure can that be to God, who knows himself, who is infinitely more excellent than all his creatures? Doth he know them, to neglect all care of them? This must be either out of sloth; but how incompatible is laziness to a pure and infinite activity? or out of majesty, but it is no less for the glory of his majesty to conduct them, than it was for the glory of his power to erect them into being; he that counts nothing unworthy of his arms to make, nothing unworthy of his understanding to know, why should he count any thing unworthy of his wisdom to govern? If he knows them, to neglect them,

it must be because he hath no will to it, or no goodness for it; either of these would be a stain upon God; to want goodness is to be evil, and to want will is to be negligent and scornful, which are inconsistent with an infinite, active goodness. Doth a father neglect providing for the wants of the family which he knows? or a physician the cure of that disease he understands? God is omniscient, he therefore sees all things; he is good, he doth not therefore neglect any thing, but conducts it to the end he appointed it. There is nothing so little that can escape his knowledge, and therefore nothing so little but falls under his providence; nothing so sublime, as to be above his understanding, and therefore nothing can be without the compass of his conduct; nothing can escape his eye, and therefore nothing can escape his care; nothing is known by him in vain, as nothing was made by him in vain; there must be acknowledged therefore some end of this knowledge of all his creatures.

Thirdly. Hence then will follow *the certainty of a day of judgment.* To what purpose can we imagine this attribute of omniscience so often declared and urged in scripture to our consideration, but in order to a government of our practice, and a future trial? Every perfection of the divine nature hath sent out brighter rays in the world, than this of his infinite knowledge; his power hath been seen in the being of the world, and his wisdom in the order and harmony of the creatures; his grace and mercy hath been plentifully poured out in the mission of a Redeemer; and his justice hath been elevated by the dying groans of the Son of God upon the cross. But hath his omniscience yet met with a glory proportionable to that of his other perfections? All the attributes of God that have appeared in some beautiful glimmerings in the world, wait for a more full manifestation in glory, as the creatures do for the *manifestation of the sons of God.* But especially this, since it hath been less evidenced than others, and as much or more abused than any; it expects therefore a public righting in the eye of the world. There have been indeed some few sparks of this perfection sensibly struck out now and then in the

world, in some horrors of conscience, which have made men become their own accusers of unknown crimes, in bringing out hidden wickedness to public view, by various providences. This hath also been the design of his judgments upon several generations, as *Psa.* 90. 8, *We are consumed by thy anger, and by thy wrath we are troubled, thou hast set our iniquities before thee, and our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.* The word עלומנו signifies *youth*, as well as *secret*, i. e. sins committed long ago, and that with secrecy. By this he hath manifested, that secret sins are not hid from his eye: though inward terrors and outward judgments have been let loose to worry men into a belief of this, yet the corruptions of men would still keep a contrary notion in their minds, that *God hath forgotten, that he hides his face from transgression, and will not regard their impiety, Psa.* 10. 11.

There must therefore be a time of trial for the public demonstration of this excellency, that it may receive its due honour by a full testimony, that no secrecy can be a shelter from it. As his justice, which consists in giving every one his due, could not be glorified, unless men were called to an account for their actions; so neither would his omniscience appear in its illustrious colours, without such a manifestation of the secret motions of men's hearts, and of villanies doné under lock and key, when none were conscious to them, but the committers of them. Now the last judgment is the time appointed for the *opening of the books, Dan.* 7. 10. The book of God's records, and conscience the counter-part, were never fully opened and read before, only now and then some pages turned to, in particular judgments; and out of those *books shall men be judged according to their works, Rev.* 20. 12. Then shall the defaced sins be brought with all their circumstances to every man's memory; the counsels of men's hearts fled far from their present remembrance; all the habitual knowledge they had of their own actions, shall by God's knowledge of them be excited to an actual review; and their works not only made manifest to themselves, but notorious to the world: all the words, thoughts, deeds of men shall be brought forth

into the light of their own minds, by the infinite light of God's understanding reflecting on them.

His knowledge renders him an unerring witness, as well as his justice a *swift witness*, *Mal.* 3. 5; a swift witness, because he shall without any circuit, or length of speech, convince their consciences by an inward illumination of them, to take notice of the blackness and deformity of their hearts and works. In all judgments God is somewhat known to be the searcher of hearts; the time of judgment is the time of his remembrance, *Hos.* 8. 13, *Now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins;* but the great instant, or *now*, of the full glorifying it, is the grand day of account. This attribute must have a time for its full discovery; and no time can be fit for it, but a time of a general reckoning. Justice cannot be exercised without omniscience; for as justice is a giving to every one his due, so there must be knowledge to discern what is due to every man; the searching the heart is in order to the rewarding the works.

Fourthly. This perfection in God, gives us *ground to believe a resurrection.* Who can think this too hard for his power, since not the least atom of the dust of our bodies can escape his knowledge? An infinite understanding comprehends every mite of a departed carcase; this will not appear impossible nor irrational to any upon a serious consideration of this excellency in God: the body is perished, the matter of it hath been since clothed with different forms and figures; part of it hath been made the body of a worm, part of it returned to the dust that hath been blown away by the wind, part of it hath been concocted in the bodies of cannibals, fish, ravenous beasts; the spirits have evaporated into air, part of the blood melted into water; what then, is the matter of the body annihilated? is that wholly perished? no, the foundation remains, though it hath put on variety of forms; the body of Abel, the first man that died, nor the body of Adam, are not this day reduced to nothing; indeed the quantity and the quality of those bodies, have been lost by various changes they have passed through since their dis-

solution; but the matter or substance of them remains entire, and is not capable to be destroyed by all those transforming alterations, in so long a revolution of time.

The body of a man in his infancy and his old age, if it were Methuselah's, is the same in the foundation in those multitude of years; though the quantity of it be altered; the quality different, though the colour and other things be changed in it; the matter of this body remains the same among all the alterations after death. And can it be so mixed with other natures and creatures, as that it is past finding out by an infinite understanding? Can any particle of this matter escape the eye of him that makes and beholds all those various alterations, and where every mite of the substance of those bodies is particularly lodged; so as that he cannot compact it together again for a habitation of that soul, that many a year before fled from it? * Since the knowledge of God is infinite, and his providence extensive over the least as well as the greatest parts of the world; he must needs know the least as well as the greatest of his creatures in their beginning, progress, and dissolution; all the forms through which the bodies of all creatures roll, the particular instants of time, and the particular place when and where those changes are made, they are all present with him; and therefore when the revolution of time allotted by him for the reunion of souls and deceased bodies is come, it cannot be doubted but out of the treasures of his knowledge he can call forth every part of the matter of the bodies of men, from the first to the last man that expired, and strip it of all those forms and figures, which it shall then have, to compact it to be a lodging for that soul which before it entertained; and though the bodies of men have been devoured by wild beasts in the earth, and fish in the sea, and been lodged in the stomachs of barbarous men-caters, the matter is not lost. There is but little of the food we take that is turned into the substance of our own bodies; that which is not proper for nourishment, which is the greatest part, is separated, and concocted, and rejected;

* Daille Serm. 15. p. 21, 22, 23, 24.

whatsoever objections are made, are answered by this attribute. Nothing hinders a God of infinite knowledge from discerning every particle of the matter, wheresoever it is disposed; and since he hath an eye to discern, and a hand to recollect and unite, what difficulty is there in believing this article of the Christian faith? He that questions this revealed truth of the resurrection of the body, must question God's omniscience as well as his omnipotence and power.

Fifthly. What semblance of reason is there to expect justification in the sight of God *by any thing in ourselves.* Is there any action done by any of us, but upon a scrutiny we may find flaws and deficiency in it? What then? Shall not this perfection of God discern them? The motes that escape our eyes cannot escape his, 1 *John* 3. 20, *God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things;* so that it is in vain for any man to flatter himself with the rectitude of any work; or enter into any debate with him who can bring a thousand articles against us, out of his own infinite records unknown to us, and unanswerable by us. If conscience, a representative or counterpart of God's omniscience in our own bosoms, find nothing done by us, but in a copy short of the original, and beholds imperfections in the best actions, God must much more discern them; we never knew a copy equally exact with the original; if our own conscience be as a thousand witnesses, the knowledge of God is as millions of witnesses against us. If our corruption be so great, and our holiness so low in our own eyes, how much greater must the one, and how much meaner must the other, appear in the eyes of God?

God hath an unerring eye to see, as well as an unspotted holiness to hate, and an unbribable justice to punish; he wants no more understanding to know the shortness of our actions, than he doth holiness to enact, and power to execute his laws. Nay, suppose we could recollect many actions, wherein there were no spot visible to us; the consideration of this attribute should scare us from resting upon any or all of them; since it is the Lord that by a piercing eye sees and judges according to the

heart, and not according to appearance. The least crookedness of a stick, not sensible to an acute eye, yet will appear when laid to the line; and the impurity of a counterfeit metal be manifest when applied to the touchstone; so will the best action of any mere man in the world, when it comes to be measured in God's knowledge by the straight line of his law.

Let every man therefore, as Paul, though *he should know nothing by himself, think not himself therefore justified;* since it is the Lord, who is of an infinite understanding, that judgeth, 1 *Cor.* 4. 4. A man may be justified in his own sight, *but not any living man can be justified in the sight of God,* in his sight, whose eye pierceth into our unknown secrets and frames: It was therefore well answered of a good man upon his death-bed, being asked what he was afraid of? "I have laboured," saith he, "with all my strength to observe the commands of "God; but since I am a man, I am ignorant whether my "works are acceptable to God, since God judges in one "manner, and I in another manner." Let the consideration therefore of this attribute, make us join with Job in his resolution, *Job* 9. 21, though *we were perfect,* yet would we *not know our own souls.* I would not stand up to plead any of my virtues before God. Let us therefore look after another righteousness, wherein the exact eye of the divine omniscience, we are sure, can discern no stain or crookedness.

Sixthly. What *honourable and adoring thoughts* ought we to have of God for this perfection? Do we not honour a man that is able to predict? Do we not think it a great part of wisdom? Have not all nations regarded such a faculty as a character and a mark of divinity? There is something more ravishing in the knowledge of future things, both to the person that knows them, and the person that hears them, than there is in any other kind of knowledge; whence the greatest prophets have been held in the greatest veneration, and men have thought it a way to glory to divine and predict. Hence it was that the devils and pagan oracles gained so much credit; upon this foundation were they established, and the ene-

mies of mankind owned for a true God; I say, from the prediction of future things, though their oracles were often ambiguous, many times false; yet those poor heathens framed many ingenious excuses, to free their adored gods from the charge of falsity and imposture: and shall we not adore the true God, the God of Israel, the *God blessed for ever*, for this incommunicable property, whereby he flies above the wings of the wind, the understandings of men and cherubims?

* Consider how great it is to know the thoughts, and intentions, and works of one man, from the beginning to the end of his life; to foreknow all these before the being of this man, when he was lodged afar off in the loins of his ancestors, yea of Adam; how much greater is it to foreknow and know the thoughts and works of three or four men, of a whole village or neighbourhood? It is greater still to know the imaginations and actions of such a multitude of men as are contained in London, Paris, or Constantinople; how much greater still to know the intentions and practices, the clandestine contrivances of so many millions, that have, do, or shall swarm in all quarters of the world, every person of them having millions of thoughts, desires, designs, affections, and actions!

Let this attribute then make the blessed God honourable in our eyes, and adorable in all our affections; especially since it is an excellency which hath so lately discovered itself, in bringing to light the hidden things of darkness, in opening, and in part confounding the wicked devices of bloody men. Especially let us adore God for it, and admire it in God, since it is so necessary a perfection, that without it the goodness of God had been impotent, and could not have relieved us; for what help can a distressed person expect from a man of the sweetest disposition, and the strongest arm, if the eyes, which should discover the danger, and direct the defence and rescue, were closed up by blindness and darkness? Adore God for this wonderful perfection.

Seventhly. In the consideration of this excellent at-

* Sabund Theol. natural. Tit. 84. somewhat changed.

tribute, *what low thoughts should we have of our own knowledge*, and how humble ought we to be before God? There is nothing man is more apt to be proud of than his knowledge; it is a perfection he glories in; but if our own knowledge of the little outside and barks of things, puffs us up, the consideration of the infiniteness of God's knowledge should abate the tumour; as our beings are nothing in regard to the infiniteness of his essence, so our knowledge is nothing in regard of the vastness of his understanding. We have a spark of being, but nothing to the heat of the sun; we have a drop of knowledge; but nothing to the divine ocean. What a vain thing is it for a shallow brook to boast of its streams before a sea, whose depths are unfathomable? As it is a vanity to brag of our strength when we remember the power of God; and of our prudence, when we glance upon the wisdom of God; so it is no less a vanity to boast of our knowledge, when we think of the understanding and knowledge of God.

How hard is it for us to know any thing?* Too much noise deafs us, and too much light dazzles us, too much distance alienates the object from us, and too much nearness bars up our sight from beholding it; when we think ourselves to be near the knowledge of a thing, as a ship to the haven, a puff of wind blows us away, and the object which we desired to know, eternally flies from us; we burn with a desire of knowledge, and yet are oppressed with the darkness of ignorance; we spend our days more in dark Egypt, than in enlightened Goshen. In what narrow bounds is all the knowledge of the most intelligent persons included?† How few understand the exact harmony of their own bodies, the nature of the life they have in common with other animals? who understands the nature of his own faculties, how he knows, and how he wills, how the understanding proposeth, and how the will embraceth, how his spiritual soul is united to his material body, what

* Pascall, p. 170.

† Amyraut. de Prædest. p. 116, 117, somewhat changed

the nature is of the operation of our spirits? nay, who understands the nature of his own body, the offices of his senses, the motion of his members, how they come to obey the command of the will, and a thousand other things? What a vain, weak, and ignorant thing is man, when compared with God? Yet there is not a greater pride to be found among devils, than among ignorant men; with a little, very little flashy knowledge, ignorant man is as proud as if he knew as God!

As the consideration of God's omniscience should render him honourable in our eyes, so it should render us vile in our own. God, because of his knowledge, is so far from disdaining his creatures, that his omniscience is a minister to his goodness; no knowledge that we are possessed of, should make us swell with too high a conceit of ourselves, and disdain of others. We have infinitely more of ignorance than knowledge. Let us therefore remember in all our thoughts of God, that he is God, and we are men; and therefore ought to be humble, as becomes men, and ignorant and foolish men; as weak creatures should lie low before an almighty God, and impure creatures before a holy God, false creatures before a faithful God, finite creatures before an infinite God: so should ignorant creatures before an all-knowing God. All God's attributes teach admiring thoughts of God, and low thoughts of ourselves.

Eighthly. It may inform us, how much this attribute is *injured in the world.* The first error after Adam's eating the forbidden fruit, was the denial of this, as well as the omnipresence of God, *Gen.* 3. 10, *I heard thy voice in the garden, and I hid myself;* as if the thickness of the trees could screen him from the eye of his Creator. And after Cain's murder; this is the first perfection he affronts, *Gen.* 4. 9, *Where is* Abel *thy brother?* saith God; how roundly doth he answer, *I know not?* As if God were as weak as man, to be put off with a lie. Man doth as naturally hate this perfection as much as he cannot naturally but acknowledge it; he wishes God to be divested of this eminency, that he might be incapable to be an inspector of his crimes.

and a searcher of the closets of his heart; in wishing him deprived of this, there is a hatred of God himself; for it is loathing an essential property of God, without which he would be a pitiful governor of the world. What a kind of God should that be, of a sinner's wishing, that had wanted eyes to see a crime, and righteousness to punish it? The want of the consideration of this attribute, is the cause of all sin in the world, *Hos. 7. 2, They consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness?* they speak not to their hearts, nor make any reflection upon the infinity of my knowledge; it is a high contempt of God, as if he were an idol, a senseless stock or stone; in all evil practices this is denied; we know God sees all things, yet we live and walk as if he knew nothing; we call him omniscient, and live as if he were ignorant; we say he is all eye, yet act as if he were wholly blind.

In particular, this attribute is injured, by invading the peculiar rights of it, by presuming on it, and by a practical denial of it.

1. By *invading the peculiar rights* of it. This is done,—

By *invocation of creatures.* Praying to saints by the Romanists, is a disparagement to this divine excellency; he that knows all things, is only fit to have the petitions of men presented to him; prayer supposeth an omniscient being, as the object of it; no other being but God ought to have that honour acknowledged to it; no understanding but his, is infinite; no other presence but his, is every where; to implore any deceased creature for a supply of our wants, is to own in them a property of the deity; and make them deities that were but men; and increase their glory by a diminution of God's honour, in ascribing that perfection to creatures which belongs only to God. Alas! they are so far from understanding the desires of our souls, that they know not the words of our lips; it is against reason to address our supplications to them that neither understand us, nor discern us, *Isa. 63. 16, Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledges us not.* The Jews never called upon Abra-

ham, though the covenant was made with him for the whole seed; not one departed saint for the whole four thousand years between the creation of the world, and the coming of Christ, was ever prayed to by the Israelites; or ever imagined to have a share in God's omniscience; so that to pray to St. Peter, St. Paul, much less to St. Roch, St. Swithen, St. Martin, St. Francis, &c. is such a superstition that hath no footing in the scripture.

* To desire the prayers of the living, with whom we have communion, who can understand and grant our desires, is founded upon mutual charity; but to implore persons that are absent, at a great distance from us, with whom we have not, nor know how to have any commerce, supposes them in their departure to have put off humanity, and commenced gods, and to be endued with some part of the divinity to understand our petitions; we are indeed to cherish their memories, consider their examples, imitate their graces, and observe their doctrines; we are to follow them as saints, but not elevate them as gods, in ascribing to them such a knowledge which is only the necessary right of their and our common Creator. As the invocation of saints mingles them with Christ in the exercise of his office, so it sets them equal with God in the throne of his omniscience. As if they had as much credit with God, as Christ, in a way of mediation; and as much knowledge of men's affairs as God himself. Omniscience is peculiar to God, and incommunicable to any creature; it is the foundation of all religion, and therefore one of the choicest acts of it, viz. prayer and invocation. To direct our vows and petitions to any else, is to invade the peculiarity of this perfection in God, and to rank some creatures in partnership with him in it.

This attribute is injured *by curiosity of knowledge.* Especially of future things which God hath not discovered in natural causes, or supernatural revelation. It is a common error of men's spirits to aspire to know what

* Daille Melang. part 2. p. 560. 561.

God would have hidden, and to pry into divine secrets; and many men are more willing to remain without the knowledge of those things which may, with a little industry, be attained, than be divested of the curiosity of enquiring into those things which are above their reach; it is hence that some have laid aside the study of the common remedies of nature to find out the philosopher's stone; which scarce any ever yet attempted, but sunk in the enterprise. * From this inclination to know the most abstruse and difficult things it is, that the horrors of magic, and the vanities of astrology have sprung, whereby men have thought to find in commerce with devils and the jurisdiction of the stars, the events of their lives, and the disposal of states and kingdoms. Hence also arose those multitudes of ways of divination invented among the heathen, and practised too commonly in these ages of the world.

This is an invasion of God's prerogative, to whom secret things belong, *Deut. 29. 29.* It is an intolerable boldness to attempt to fathom that, the knowledge whereof God hath reserved to himself; and to search that which God will have to surpass our understandings; whereby we more truly envy God a knowledge superior to our own, than we in Adam imagined that he envied us. Ambition is the greatest cause of this, ambition to be accounted some great thing among men, by reason of a knowledge estranged from the common mass of mankind; but more especially that soaring pride to be equal with God, which lurks in our nature ever since the fall of our first parents: this is not yet laid aside by man, though it was the first thing that embroiled the world with the wrath of God. Some think curiosity of knowledge was the cause of the fall of the devils; I am sure it was the foil of Adam, and is yet the crime of his posterity; had he been contented to know what God had furnished him with, neither he nor his posterity had smarted under the venom of the serpent's breath.

All curious and bold enquiries into things not revealed,

* Amyraut. Moral. Tom. 3, p. 75, &c.

are an attempt upon the throne of God; and are both sinful and pernicious, like to glaring upon the sun; where instead of a greater acuteness, we meet with blindness, and too dearly buy our ignorance in attempting a superfluous knowledge. As God's knowledge is destined to the government of the world, so should ours be to the advantage of the world, and not degenerate into vain speculations.

This attribute is injured in *swearing by creatures:* To swear by the name of God in a righteous cause, * when we are lawfully called to it by a superior power, or for the necessary decision of some controversy, for the ends of charity and justice, is an act of religion, and a part of worship, founded upon, and directed to, the honour of this attribute; by it we acknowledge the glory of his infallible knowledge of all things; but to swear by false gods or by any creature, is blasphemous; it sets the creature in the place of God, and invests it in that which is the peculiar honour of the divinity; for when any swear truly, they intend the invocation of an infallible witness, and the bringing an undoubted testimony for what they assert; while any therefore swear by a creature, or a false God, they profess that that creature, or that which they esteeem to be a god, is an infallible witness, which to be is only the right of God; they attribute to the creature that which is the property of God alone, to know the heart, and to be a witness whether they speak true or no; and this was accounted by all nations the true design of an oath. As to swear falsely is a plain denial of the all-knowledge of God; so to swear by any creature, is to set the creature upon the throne of God, in ascribing that perfection to the creature, which sovereignly belongs to the Creator; for it is not in the power of any to witness to the truth of the heart, but of him that is the searcher of hearts.

We sin against this attribute *by censuring the hearts of others.* An open crime indeed falls under our cognizance, and therefore under our judgment; for whatsoever falls

* Cajetan. Sum. p. 190.

under the authority of man to be punished, falls under the judgment of man to be censured as an act contrary to the law of God; yet when a censure is built upon the evil of the act which is obvious to the view, if we take a step farther to judge the heart and state, we leave the revealed rule of the law, and ambitiously erect a tribunal equal with God's; and usurp a judicial power, pertaining only to the supreme governor of the world; and consequently pretend to be possessed of this perfection of omniscience, which is necessary to render him capable of the exercise of that sovereign authority. For it is in respect of his dominion, that God hath the supreme right to judge: and in respect of his knowledge that he hath an incommunicable capacity to judge.

In an action that is doubtful, the good or evil whereof depends only upon God's determination, and wherein much of the judgment depends upon the discerning the intention of the agent, we cannot judge any man without a manifest invasion of God's peculiar right; such actions are to be tried by God's knowledge, not by our surmises; God only is the *master* in such cases, *to whom* a person *stands or falls.* Till the true principle and ends of an action be known by the confession of the party acting, a true judgment of it is not in our power. Principles and ends lie deep and hid from us; and it is intolerable pride to pretend to have a joint key with God to open that cabinet which he hath reserved to himself.

Besides the violation of the rule of charity in misconstruing actions which may be great and generous in their principle, we invade God's right, as if our ungrounded imaginations and conjectures were in joint commission with this sovereign perfection; and thereby we become usurping *judges of evil thoughts, James* 2. 4. It is therefore a boldness worthy to be punished by the judge, to assume the capacity and authority of him who is the only judge. For as the execution of the divine law, for the inward violation of it, belongs only to God, so is the right of judging a prerogative belonging only to his omniscience; his right is therefore invaded, if we pretend to a knowledge of it. This humour of men the apostle checks

when he saith, *He that judgeth me is the Lord, therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will manifest the counsels of all hearts*, Cor. 4. 5. It is not the time yet for God to erect the tribunal for the trial of men's hearts, and the principles of their actions; he hath reserved the glorious discovery of this attribute for another season; we must not therefore presume to judge of the counsels of men's hearts, till God hath revealed them by opening the treasuries of his own knowledge.

Much less are we to judge any man's final condition. Manasseh may sacrifice to devils, and unconverted Paul tear the church in pieces; but God had mercy on them and called them. The action may be censured, not the state, for we know not whom God may call. In censuring men we may doubly imitate the devil, in a false accusation of the brethren, as well as in an ambitious usurpation of the rights of God.

2. This perfection is injured by *presuming upon it*, or making an ill use of it. As in the neglect of prayer for the supply of men's wants, because God knows them already, so that that which is an encouragement to prayer, they make the reason of restraining it before God. Prayer is not to administer knowledge to God, but to acknowledge this admirable perfection of the divine nature. If God did not know, there were indeed no use of prayer, it would be as vain a thing to send up our prayers to heaven, as to implore the senseless statue or picture of a prince for protection. We pray because God knows, for though he know our wants with a knowledge of vision, yet he will not know them with a knowledge of supply, till he be sought unto. All the excellencies of God are grounds of adoration; and this excellence is the ground of that part of worship we call prayer. If God be to be worshipped, he is to be called upon; invocations of his name in our necessities is a chief act of worship; whence the temple, the place of solemn worship, was not called the house of sacrifice, but the *house of prayer*. Prayer was not appointed for God's information, as if he were ignorant, but for the

expression of our desires; not to furnish him with a knowledge of what we want, but to manifest to him by some rational sign convenient to our nature, our sense of that want which he knows by himself. So that prayer is not designed to acquaint God with our wants, but to express the desire of a remedy of our wants. God knows our wants, but hath not made promises barely to our wants, but to our asking: that his omniscience in hearing as well as his sufficiency in supplying, may have a sensible honour in our acknowledgments and receipts. It is therefore an ill use of this excellency of God to neglect prayer to him as needless, because he knows already.

3. This perfection of God is wronged, *by a practical denial of it.* It is the language of every sin, and so God takes it when he comes to reckon with men for their impieties. Upon this he charges the greatness of the iniquity of Israel, the overflowing of blood in the land, and the perverseness of the city? *They say the Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord sees not, Ezek.* 9. 9. They deny his eyes to see, and his resolution to punish.

1. It will appear, in *forbearing sin, from a sense of man's knowledge,* not of God's. Open impieties are refrained because of the eye of man; but secret sins are not checked because of the eye of God. Wickedness is committed in darkness, that is restrained in light; as if darkness were as great a clog to God's eyes as it is to ours; as though his eyes were muffled with the curtains of the night. This it is likely was at the root of Jonah's flight, he might have some secret thought, that his master's eye could not follow him, as though the close hatches of a ship could secure him from the knowledge of God, as well as the sides of the ship could from the dashing of the waves. What lies most upon the conscience when it is graciously wounded, is least regarded, or contemned, when it is basely inclined. David's heart smote him not only for his sin in the gross, but as particularly circumstantiated by the commission of it in the sight of God; *Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight. Psal.* 51. 5. None knew the reason of

Uriah's death but myself, and because others knew it not, I neglected any regard to this divine eye. When Jacob's sons used their brother Joseph so barbarously, they took care to hide it from their father; but cast away all thoughts of God, from whom it could not be concealed.

Doth not the presence of a child bridle a man, from the act of a longed for sin, when the eye of God is of no force to restrain him? As if God's knowledge were of less value than the sight of a little boy or girl, as if a child only could see, and God were blind. He that will forbear an unworthy action for fear of an informer, will not forbear it for God; as if Gods' omniscience, were not as full an intelligencer to him, as man can be an informer to a magistrate. As we acknowledge the power of men seeing us, when we are ashamed to commit a filthy action in their view; so we discover the power of God seeing us, when we regard not what we do before the light of his eyes. Secret sins are more against God than open: Open sins are against the law, secret sins are against the law and this prime perfection of his nature. The majesty of God is not only violated, but the omniscience of God disowned, who is the only witness; we must in all of them, either imagine him to be without eyes to behold us, or without an arm of justice to punish us. And often it is, I believe, in such cases, that if any thoughts of God's knowledge strike upon men, they quickly damp them, lest they should begin to know what they fear, and fear that they might not eat their pleasant sinful morsels.

2. It appears, in *partial confessions of sin before God.* As by a free, full, and ingenuous confession, we offer a due glory to this attribute, so by a feigned and curtailed confession we deny him the honour of it: for though by any confession we in part own him to be a sovereign and judge, yet by a half and pared acknowledgment, we own him to be no more than a human and ignorant one. Achan's full confession gave God the glory of his omniscience, manifested in the discovery of his secret crime. And Joshua said to Achan, *My son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him. Josh.* 7.19. And so, *Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me, Psal.*

50. 23. *or confessions*, as the word signifies, in which sense I would rather take it, referring to this attribute, which God seems to tax sinners with the denial of, ver. 21, telling them that he would open the records of their sins before them, and indict them particularly for every one. If therefore you would glorify this attribute, which shall one day break open your consciences, offer to me a sincere confession. When David speaks of the happiness of a pardoned man, * *Psal.* 2. 1, 2. he adds, *in whose spirit there is no guile*, not meaning sincerity in geral, but that ingenuity in confessing.

To excuse or extenuate sin, is to deny God the knowledge of the depths of our deceitful hearts. When we will mince it rather than aggravate it; lay it upon the inducements of others, when it was the free act of our own wills, study shifts to deceive our judge, this is to speak lies of him, as the expression is, *Hos.* 7. 13. As though he were a God easy to be cheated, and knew no more than we are willing to declare. What did Saul's transferring his sin from himself to the people, but charge God with a defect in this attribute? 1 *Sam.* 15. 15. When man could not be like God in his knowledge, he would fancy a God like to him in his ignorance; and imagine a possibility of hiding himself from his knowledge, and all men tread more or less in their father's steps, and are fruitful to devise distinctions, to disguise errors in doctrine, and excuses to palliate errors in practice; this crime Job removes from himself, chap. 31. 33, when he speaks of several acts of his sincerity, *If I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom*, I hid not any of my sins in my own conscience, but acknowledged God a witness to them, and gave him the glory of his knowledge by a free confession. I did not conceal it from God as Adam did, or as men ordinarily do; as if God could understand no more of their secret crimes than they will let him, and had no more sense of their faults, than they would furnish him with. As the first rise of confession is the owning of this attribute (for

* Camero. p. 89. col. 1.

the justice of God would not scare men, nor the holiness of God awe them without a sense of his knowledge of their iniquities) so to drop out some fragments of confession, discover some sins, and conceal others, is a plain denial of the extensiveness of the divine knowledge.

3. It is discovered by putting God off with *an outside worship*. Men are often flatterers of God, and think to bend him by formal hypocritical devotions, without the concurrence of their hearts, as though he could not pierce into the darkness of the mind, but as little know us as one man knows another. There are such things as *feigned lips*, a contradiction between the heart and the tongue, a clamour in the voice and scoffing in the soul; a crying to God, thou art my Father, the guide of my youth, and yet speaking and *doing evil to the utmost* of our power, *Psal.* 17. 1. *Jer.* 3. 4, 5. As if God could be imposed upon by fawning pretences; and like old Isaac, take Jacob for Esau, and be cozened by the smell of his garments: as if he could not discern the negro heart under an angel's garb. Thus Ephraim, the ten tribes, apostatized from the true religion, would go with their flocks and their herds to *seek the Lord*, would sacrifice multitudes of sheep and heifers, which was the main outside of the Jewish religion; only with their flocks and their herds, not with their hearts, with those inward qualifications of deep humiliation and repentance for sin, as though outside appearances limited God's observation, whereas God had told them before, that he knew Ephraim and Israel *was not hid from him*, *Hos.* 5. 6, 3. Thus to do is to put a cheat upon God, and think to blind his all-seeing eye; and therefore it is called *deceit*, *Psal.* 78. 36. They did *flatter him with their mouths;* the word פתה signifies to deceive as well as to flatter; not that they or any one else can deceive God, but it implies an endeavour to deceive him by dissembling words and gestures, or an imagination that God was satisfied with bare professions, and would not concern himself in a further inquisition. This is an unworthy conceit of God, to fancy that we can satisfy for inward sins, and avert approaching judgments, by external offerings, by a loud voice with a false heart, as

if God, like children, would be pleased with the glittering of an empty shell, or the rattling of stones, the chinking of money, a mere voice, and crying without inward frames and intentions of service.

4. In cherishing multitudes of evil thoughts. No man but would blush for shame, if the base, impure, slovenly thoughts, either in or out of duties of worship were visible to the understanding of man; how diligent would he be to curb his luxuriant and unworthy fancies, as well as bite in his words; but when we give the reins to the motions of our hearts, and suffer them to run at random without a curb, it is an evidence we are not concerned for their falling under the notice of the eye of God; and it argues a very weak belief of this perfection, or scarce any belief at all. Who can think any man's heart possessed with a sense of his infinite excellency, that suffers his mind, in his meditation on God, to wander into every sty, and be picking up stones upon a dunghill? What doth it intimate, but that those thoughts are as invisible, or inaudible to God, as they are to men without the garments of words? * When a man thinks of obscene things, his own natural notions, if revived, would tell him, that God discerns what he thinks, that the depths of his heart are open to him: and the voice of those notions are, deface those vain imaginations out of your minds. But what is done? Men cast away rational light, muster up conceits, that God sees them not, knows them not, and so sink into the impurities of their sordid imaginations, as though they remained in darkness to God.

I might further instance, in *omission of prayer*, which arises sometimes from a flat atheism. Who will call upon God that believes no such being? Or from partial atheism, either a denial of God's sufficiency to help, or of his omniscience to know, as if God were like the statue of Jupiter in Crete, framed without ears. And this farther appears in the *hypocritical pretences of men, to exempt them from the service God calls them to.* When men pretend one thing and intend another, this lurks in the

* Drexel Nicetas. lib. 2. cap. 10. p. 357.

veins sometimes of the best men; sometimes it ariseth from the fear of man; when men are more afraid of the power of man, than of dissembling with the Almighty: it will pretend a virtue to cover a secret wile; and choose the *tongue of the crafty*, *Job* 15. 5.

The case is plain in Moses, who when ordered to undertake an eminent service, pretends a want of eloquence, and an ungrateful *slowness of speech*. *Exod.* 4. 10. This generous soul, that before was not afraid to discover himself in the midst of Egypt for his countrymen, answers sneakingly to God, and would vail his carnal fear, with a pretence of insufficiency and humility; *Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?* *Exod.* 3. 11. He could not well alledge an inability to go to Pharaoh, since he had an education in the Egyptian learning, which rendered him capable to appear at court. God at last shews it all to be a dissimulation, and that whatsoever was the pretence, fear lay at the bottom, he was afraid of his life upon his appearance before Pharaoh, from whose face he had fled upon the slaying the Egyptian, which God intimates to him; *Go, and return into Egypt, for all the men are dead which sought thy life*. *Exod.* 4. 19. What does this carriage speak, but as if God's eye were not upon our inward parts, as though we could lock him out of our hearts, that cannot be shut out from any creek of the hearts of men and angels.

PART VI.

IMPROVEMENT.—THE INFINITE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD A SOURCE OF CONSOLATION.

The comfort of the church under the hostility of the world —A special object of trust—God knows the persons of his elect—Knows their sincerity—Comfort in all the secret operations of the mind towards himself—In all their afflictions—Infirmities—Fears—Pardon of sin—Secrecy, no refuge to the sinner—God's knowledge dreadful to hypocrites—Sinners in general—We should maintain a sense of God's knowledge—A check to sin—Incentive to watchfulness—Preparation for duty—Promotes sincerity—Humility—Submission.

IT is a ground of great comfort under the present dispensation wherein we are; * we have heard the doctrinal part, and God hath given us the experimental part of it in his special providence this day, upon the stage of the world. And blessed be God, that he hath given us a ground of comfort, without going out of our ordinary course to fetch it, whereby it seems to be peculiarly of God's ordering for us.

1. It is a comfort in all the clandestine contrivances of men against the church. His eyes pierce as far as the depths of hell: not one of his church's adversaries lies

* Nov. 1678. When the popish plot was discovered.

in a mist, all are as plain as the stars which he numbers; *mine adversaries are all before thee, Psa. 69. 19,* more exactly known to thee, than I can recount them. It is a prophecy of Christ, wherein Christ is brought in speaking to God, of his own and the church's enemies: he comforts himself with this, that God hath his eye upon every particular person among his adversaries: he knows where they repose themselves, when they go out to consult, and when they come in with their resolves: he discerns all the rage that spirits their hearts, in what corner it lurks, how it acts; all the disorders, motions of it, and every object of that rage; he cannot be deceived by the closet and subtilest person. Thus God speaks concerning Sennacherib and his host against Jerusalem. After he had spoke of the forming of his church, and the weakness of it, he adds, *But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me; because thy rage against me, and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back, &c. Isa. 37. 28, 39.* He knows all the methods of the counsels, the stages they had laid, the manner of execution of their designs, all the ways whither they turned themselves, and would use them no better than men do devouring fish and untamed beasts, with a hook in the nose and a bridle in the mouth. Those statesmen in *Isa. 29. 15,* thought their contrivances too deep for God to fathom, and too close for God to frustrate; *They seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord; surely your turning of things upside down, shall be esteemed as the potter's clay,* of no more force and understanding, than a potter's vessel, which understands not its own form wrought by the artificer, nor the use it is put to by the buyer and possessor; or shall be esteemed as a potter's vessel, that can be as easily flung back into the mass from whence it was taken, as preserved in the figure it is now endued with. No secret designer is shrouded from God's sight, or can be sheltered from God's arm; he understands the venom of their hearts, better than we can feel it, and discovers their inward fury more plainly, than we can see the sting

or teeth of a viper when they are opened for mischief; and to what purpose doth God know and see them, but in order to deliver his people from them in his own due time; *I know their sorrow, and am come down to deliver them. Exod.* 3. 7, 8. The walls of Jerusalem are continually before him, he knows therefore all that would undermine and demolish them; none can hurt Zion by any ignorance or inadvertency in God.

It is observable, that our Saviour, assuming to himself a different title in every epistle to the seven churches, particularly ascribes to himself this of knowledge and wrath in that to Thyatira, an emblem or description of the Romish state: *And unto the angel of the church of Thyatira writ, these things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like to a flame of fire, and his feet like fine brass. Rev.* 2. 19. His eyes, like a flame of fire are of a piercing nature, insinuating themselves into all the pores and parts of the body they encounter with, and his feet like brass to crush them with, is explained, verse 23, *I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am he which searches the reins and the heart, and I will give to every one of you according to your works.* He knows every design of the Romish party, designed by that church of Thyatira. * Jezebel, there signifies a whorish church, such a church as shall act as Jezebel, Ahab's wife, who was not only a worshipper of idols, but propagated idolatry in Israel, slew the prophets, persecuted Elijah, murdered Naboth, the name whereof signifies prophesy, seized upon his possession. And if it be said that verse 19, this church was commended for her works, faith, patience; it is true, Rome did at first strongly profess christianity, and maintained the interest of it, but afterwards fell into the practice of Jezebel, and committed spiritual adultery: and is she to be owned for a wife, that now plays the harlot, because she was honest and modest at her first marriage; † and though she shall

* For the evidence of it, I refer you to Dr. More's Exposition of the Seven Churches, worthy every learned and understanding man's reading, and of every sober Romanist.

† Coc. in loc.

be destroyed yet not speedily, verse 22. *I will cast her into a bed*, seems to intimate the destruction of Jezebel, not to be at once and speedily, but in a lingering way, and by degrees, as sickness consumes a body.

2. This perfection of God fits him to be a special object of *trust*. If he were forgetful, what comfort could we have in any promise? How could we depend upon him, if he were ignorant of our state? His compassions to pity us, his readiness to relieve us, his power to protect and assist us, would be insignificant, without his omniscience to inform his goodness, and direct the arm of his power. This perfection is as it were God's office of intelligence. As you go to your memorandum book to know what you are to do; so doth God to his omniscience. This perfection is God's eye, to acquaint him with the necessities of his church, and directs all his other attributes in their exercise for and about his people. You may depend upon his mercy that hath promised, and upon his truth to perform, upon his sufficiency to supply you, and his goodness to relieve you, and his righteousness to reward you, because he hath an infinite understanding to know you and your wants, you and your services. And without this knowledge of his, no comfort could be drawn from any other perfection; none of them could be a sure nail to hang our hopes and confidence upon. This is that, the church always celebrated. *He hath remembered his covenant for ever, and the word which he hath commanded to a thousand generations. He remembered his holy promise; and he remembered for them his covenant*, *Psal.* 105. 42. and 106. 45, he remembers and understands his covenant, therefore his promise to perform it, and therefore our wants to supply them.

3. And the rather, because God knows *the persons of all his own.* He hath in his infinite understanding, the exact number of all the individual persons that belong to him; *The Lord knows them that are his. 2 Tim.* 2. 19, He knows all things, because he hath created them; and he knows his people because he hath not only made them, but also chose them. He could no more choose

he knew not what, than he could create he knew not what; he knows them under a double title; of creation as creatures, in the common mass of creation; as new creatures, by a particular act of separation. He cannot be ignorant of them in time, whom he foreknew from eternity; his knowledge in time is the same he had from eternity; he foreknew them to whom he intended to give the grace of faith, and he knows them after they believe, because he knows his own act, in bestowing grace upon them, and his own mark and seal wherewith he hath stamped them; no doubt but he that *calls the stars of heaven by their names*, knows the number of those living stars that sparkle in the firmament of his church. He cannot be ignorant of their persons, when he numbers the hairs of their heads, and hath registered their names in the book of life. As he only had an infinite mercy to make the choice; so he only hath an infinite understanding to comprehend their persons. We only know the elect of God by a moral assurance in the judgment of charity, when the conversation of men is according to the doctrine of God; we have not an infallible knowledge of them, we may be often mistaken; Judas, a devil, may be judged by man for a saint, till he be stripped of his disguise. God only hath an infallible knowledge of them, he knows his own records, and the counterparts in the hearts of his people; none can counterfeit his seal, nor can any raze it out.

* When the church is either scattered by persecution, or overgrown with superstition and idolatry, that there is scarce any grain of true religion appearing, as in the time of Elijah, who complained that he was left alone, as if the church had been rooted out of that corner of the world, yet God knew that he had a number fed in a cave, and had reserved *seven thousand men* that had preserved the purity of his worship, and *not bowed their knee to Baal*, 1 *Kings* 19. 14, 18. Christ knew his sheep, as well as he is known of them; yea, better than they can know him, History acquaints us, that Cyrus

* Turretin's Sermons, p. 362.

had so vast a memory, that he knew the name of every particular soldier in his army, which consisted of diverse nations; shall it be too hard for an infinite understanding to know every one of that host that march under his banners? May he not as well know them, as know the number, qualities, and influences of those stars which lie concealed from our eye, as well as those that are visible to our sense? Yes, he knows them, as a general to employ them, as a shepherd to preserve them; he knows them in the world to guard them, and he knows them when they are out of the world to gather their bodies from corruption and raise them in glory. As he knew them from all eternity to elect them, so he knows them in time to clothe their persons with righteousness, to protect their persons in calamity according to his good pleasure, and at last to raise and reward them according to his promise.

4. We may take comfort from hence, that our *sincerity cannot be unknown* to an infinite understanding. Not a way of the righteous is concealed from him, and therefore *they shall stand in judgment before him; The Lord knows the way of the righteous, Psal.* 1. 6. He knows them to observe them, and he knows them to reward them. How comfortable is it to appeal to this attribute of God for our integrity, with Hezekiah, *Remember Lord how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, 2 Kings* 20. 3. Christ himself is brought in this prophetical psalm drawing out the comfort of this attribute, *I have not restrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest, Psal.* 40. 9, meaning his faithfulness in declaring the righteousness of God. Job follows the same steps, *Also now, behold my record is in heaven, and my witness is on high, Job* 16. 19. My innocence hath the testimony of men, but my greatest support is in the records of God. Also now, or besides the testimony of my own heart, I have another witness in heaven that knows the heart, and can only judge of the principles of my actions, and clear me from the scorns of my friends, and the accusations of men, with a justification of my innocence: he repeats it twice to

take the greater comfort in it. God knows that we do that in the simplicity of our hearts, which may be judged by men to be done for unworthy and sordid ends: he knows not only the outward action, but the inward affection; and praises that which men often dispraise; and writes down that with, *Well done, good and faithful servant*, which men defile with their severest censures. How refreshing is it to consider, that God never mistakes the appearance for reality, nor is led by the judgment of man? He sits in heaven, and laughs at their follies and censures. If God had no sounder and no more piercing a judgment than man, woe be to the sincerest souls, that are often judged hypocrites by some. What a happiness is it for integrity to have a judge of infinite understanding, who will one day wipe off the dirt of worldly reproaches? Again, God knows the least dram of grace and righteousness in the hearts of his people, though but as a *smoking flax*, or as the least bruise of a saving conviction; and knows it so as to cherish it; he knows that work he hath begun, and never hath his eye off from it to abandon it.

5. The consideration of this excellent perfection in God may comfort us in our *secret prayers, sighs, and works.* If God were not of infinite understanding, to pierce into the heart, what comfort hath a poor creature that hath a scantiness of expressions, but a heart in a flame? If God did not understand the heart, faith and prayer, which are internal works, would be in vain: How could he give that mercy our hearts plead for, if he were ignorant of our inward affections? Hypocrites might scale heaven by lofty expressions, and a sincere soul come short of the happiness he is prepared for, for want of flourishing gifts. Prayer is an internal work, words are but the garment of prayer; meditation is the body, and affections the soul and life of prayer; *Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation*, prayer is a rational act, an act of the mind, not the act of a parrot; prayer is an act of the heart, though the speaking prayer is the work of the tongue; now God gives ear to the words, but he considers the meditation, the

frame of the heart. Consideration is a more exact notice than hearing, the act only of the ear. Were not God of an infinite understanding, and omniscient, he might take fine clothes, a heap of garments, for the man himself; and be put off by glittering words, without a spiritual frame.

What matter of rejoicing is it, that we call not upon a deaf and ignorant idol; but on one that listens to our secret petitions to give them dispatch, that knows our desires afar off, and from the infinity of his mercy, joined with his omniscience, stands ready to give us a return? Hath he not a book of remembrance for them that fear him, and for their sighs and ejaculations to him as well as their discourses of him; and not only what prayers they utter, but what gracious and holy thoughts they have of him? That *thought upon his name*, *Mal.* 3. 16. Though millions of supplications be put up at the same time, yet they have all a distinct file (as I may say) in an infinite understanding, which perceives and comprehends them all. As he observes millions of sins committed at the same time by a vast number of persons to record them in order to punishment; so he distinctly discerns an infinite number of cries at the same moment to register them in order to an answer.

A sigh cannot escape an infinite understanding, though crowded among a mighty multitude of cries from others, or covered with many unwelcome distractions in ourselves, no more than a believing touch from the woman that had the bloody issue, could be concealed from Christ, and be undiscerned from the press of the thronging multitudes: our groans are as audible and intelligible to him as our words, and he knows what is the mind of his own spirit, though expressed in no plainer languge than sobs and heavings. Thus David cheers up himself under the neglects of his friends, *Lord, my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee*, *Psal.* 38. 9. Not a groan of a panting spirit shall be lost, till God hath lost his knowledge; not a petition forgotten while God hath a record, nor a tear dried while God hath a bottle to reserve it in, *Psal.* 56. 8.

Our secret works are also known and observed by him; not only our outward labour, but our inward love in it, *Heb.* 6. 10. If with Isaac we go privately into the field to meditate, or secretly *cast our bread upon the waters*, he keeps his eye upon us to reward us, and returns the fruit into our own bosoms; yea, though it be but a cup of cold water, from an inward spring of love given to a disciple. *He sees your works and your labours, and faith and patience, Mat.* 6. 4, 6. in them, all the marks of your industry, and strength of your intentions, and will be as exact at last in order to a due praise, as to open sins in order to a just *recompence.*

6. The consideration of this excellent attribute, affords comfort in the *afflictions* of good men. He knows their pressures, as well as hears their cries, *Exod.* 3. 7. His knowledge comes not by information from us; but his compassionate listening to our cries springs from his own inspection into our sorrows; he is affected with them before we make any discovery of them: he is not ignorant of the best season when they may be usefully inflicted, and when they may be profitably removed: the tribulation and poverty of his church is not unknown to him, *I know thy works and tribulation, &c. Rev.* 2. 8, 9. He knows their works, and what tribulation they meet with for him: he sees their extremities when they are toiling against the wind and tide of the world: yea, the natural exigencies of the multitude are not neglected by him, he discerns to take care of them: our Saviour considered the three days' fasting of his followers, and miraculously provides for them in the wilderness.

No good man is ever out of God's mind, and therefore never out of his compassionate care: his eye pierceth into their dungeons and pities their miseries. Joseph may forget his brethren, and the disciples not know Christ, when he walks upon the midnight waves and turbulent sea; * but a lion's den cannot obscure Daniel from his sight, nor the depths of the whale's belly bury Jonah from the divine understanding: he discerns Peter in his

* Barlow's Man's Refuge, p. 29, 30.

chains, and Stephen under the stones of martyrdom: he knows Lazarus at the rich man's gate, and Abel wallowing in his blood: his eye and knowledge go with his people when they are transplanted into foreign countries, and sold for slaves into the *islands of the* Grecians, *for he will raise them out of the place, Joel* 3. 6, 7. He would defeat the hopes of the persecutors, and applaud the patience of his people: He knows his people in the tabernacle of life, and in the *valley of the shadow of death*. He knows all penal evils because he commissions and directs them: he knows the instruments because they are his *sword*, and he knows his gracious sufferer because he he hath his mark: he discerns Job in his anguish, and the devil in his malice: by the direction of this attribute he orders calamities, and rescues from them. *Thou hast seen it, for thou beholdest mischief and spite, Psal.* 10. 14. That is the comfort of the Psalmist, and the comfort of every believer, and the ground of committing themselves to God under all the injustice of men.

7. It is a comfort in all our *infirmities*. As he knows our sins to charge them; so he knows the weakness of our nature to pity us. As his infinite understanding may scare us, because he knows our transgressions; so it may relieve us, because he knows our natural mutability in our first creation: *He knows our frame, he remembers that we are dust, Psal.* 103. 14. It is the reason of the precedent verses, why he removes our transgression from us, why he is so backward in punishing; so patient in waiting, so forward in pitying. Why? He doth not only remember our sins, but he remembers our frame or forming, what brittle, though clear glasses we were by creation, how easy to be broken. He remembers our impotent and weak condition by corruption; what a sink we have of vain imaginations that remain in us after regeneration; he not only considers that we were made according to his image, and therefore able to stand, but that we were made of dust and weak matter, and had a sensitive soul like that of beasts, as well as an intellectual nature, like that of angels, and therefore liable to follow the dictates of it without exact care and watchfulness. If he remembered only the first,

there would be no issue but indignation; but the consideration of the latter moves his compassion.

How miserable should we be for want of this perfection in the divine nature, whereby God remembers and reflects upon his past act in our first frame, and the mindfulness of our condition excites his compassion to us? Had he lost the knowledge how he first framed us, did he not still remember the mutability of our nature, as we were formed and stamped in his mint, how much more wretched would our condition be than it is? If his remembrance of our original be one ground of his pity, the sense of his omniscience should be a ground of our comfort, in the stirring of our infirmities: he remembers we were but dust, when he made us; and yet remembers we are but dust, while he preserves and forbears us.

8. It is some comfort in the *fears of some lurking corruption* in our hearts. We know by this whither to address ourselves for the search and discovery of it: perhaps some blessings we want are retarded, some calamities, we understand not the particular cause of, are inflicted, some petitions we have put up, hang too long for an answer; and the chariot wheels of divine goodness move slow and are long in coming: let us beg the aid of this attribute to open to us the remoras, to discover what base affection there is that retards the mercies we want, or attracts the affliction we feel, or bars the door against the return of our supplications. What our dim sight cannot discover, the clear eye of God can make visible to us. *Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me, Job* 10. 2.

As in want of pardon, we particularly plead his mercy, and in our desires for the performance of his promise, we argue with him from his faithfulness; so in the fear of any insincerity or hidden corruption we should implore his omniscience: for as God is a God in covenant, our God in the whole of his nature; so the perfections of his nature are employed in their several stations, as assistances of his creatures. This was David's practice and comfort; after that large meditation on the omniscience and omnipresence of God, he his turns thoughts of it into petitions for the employ-

ment of it in the concerns of his soul, and begs a mercy suitable to the glory of this perfection, *Search me, O God, and try my heart, try me and know my thoughts ; Psal.* 139. 23. Dive to the bottom, *and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting*, ver. 24. His desire is not barely that God should know him, for it would be senseless to beg of God that he should have mercy, or faithfulness, or power, or knowledge in his nature; but he desires the exercise of this attribute, in the discovery of himself to himself, in order to his sight of any wicked way, and humiliation for it, and reformation of it, in order to his conduct to everlasting life.

As we may appeal to this perfection to judge us when the sincerity of our actions is censured by others; so we may implore it to search us, when our sincerity is questioned by ourselves: that our minds may be enlightened by a beam from his knowledge, and the little thieves may be pulled out of their dens in our hearts by the hand of his power. In particular it is our comfort that we can, and our necessity that we must, address particularly to this, when we engage solemnly in a work of self examination; that we may have a clearer eye to direct us than our own, that we may not mistake brass for gold, or counterfeit graces for true; that nothing that is filthy, and fit to be cast out, may escape our sight, and preserves its stations. And we need not question the laying at the door of this neglect, viz. not calling in this attribute to our aid, whose proper office it is, as I may say, to search and enquire all the mistakes, ill success, and fruitlessness of our endeavours in self-examination, because we would engage in it, in the pitiful strength of our own dimness, and not in the light of God's countenance and the assistance of his eye, which can discern what we cannot see, and discover that to us, which we cannot manifest to ourselves. It is a comfort to a learner of an art to have a skilful eye to overlook his work, and inform him of the defects. Beg the help of the eye of God in all your searches and self-examinations.

The consideration of this attribute is comfortable in *our assurances of, and reflections upon the pardon of sin, or*

seeking of it. As God punishes men for sin according to his knowledge of them, which is greater than the knowledge their own consciences have of them; so he pardons according to his knowledge: he pardons not only according to our knowledge but according to his own: he is greater than any man's heart, to condemn for that which a man is at present ignorant of; and greater than our hearts, to pardon that which is not at present visible to us; he knows that which the most watchful conscience cannot survey. If God had not an infinite understanding of us, how could we have a perfect and full pardon from him? it would not stand with his honour to pardon he knew not what. He knows what crimes we have to be pardoned, when we know not all of them ourselves, that stand in need of a gracious remission; his omniscience beholds every sin to charge it upon our Saviour. If he knows our sins that are black, he knows the righteousness of Christ which is pure, and the utmost extent of his merits, as well as the demerit of our iniquities. As he knows the filth of our sin, he also knows the covering of our Saviour: he knows the value of the Redeemer's sufferings, and exactly understands every plea in the intercession of our Advocate. Though God knows our sins *oculo indice*, yet he doth not see them *oculo judice*, with a judicial eye: his omniscience stirs not up his justice to revenge, but his mercy to pity. His infinite understanding of what Christ hath done, directs him to disarm his justice. As he understands better than we what we have committed; so he understands better than we what our Saviour hath merited; and his eye directs his hand in the blotting out our guilt, and applying the remedy.

3. The third use shall be to sinners to *humble them*, and put them upon *serious consideration.* This attribute speaks terrible things to a profligate sinner. Basil thinks that the ripping open the sins of the damned to their faces by this perfection of God, is more terrible than their other torments in hell. God knows the persons of wicked men, not one is exempted from his eye, he sees all the actions of men as well as he knows their persons, *He knows vain men, he sees wickedness also, Job* 11. 11. *His eye is upon all their goings, Job* 34. 21 He hears the most pri-

vate whispers, *Psal.* 139. 4. The scope, manner, circumstance of speaking he knows it altogether; *he understands all our thoughts*, the first bubblings of that bitter spring, *Psal.* 139. 2. The quickest glances of the fancy, the closest musings of the mind, and the abortive wishes of the will, the language of the heart, as well as the language of the tongue; not a foolish thought, or an idle word; not a wanton glance, or a dishonest action; not a negligent service, or a distracting fancy, but is visible to him. How much better would it be for desperate sinners to have their crimes known to all the angels in heaven, and men upon earth, and devils in hell, than that they should be known to their Sovereign, whose laws they have violated, and to their Judge, whose righteousness obligeth him to revenge the injury?

1. Consider what a poor refuge is *secrecy* to a sinner. Not the mists of a foggy day, nor the obscurity of the darkest night, nor the closest curtains, nor the deepest dungeon, can hide any sin from the eye of God. Adam is known in his thickets, and Jonah in his cabin. Achan's wedge of gold is discerned by him, though buried in the earth, and hooded with a tent. Shall Sarah be unseen by him, when she mockingly laughs behind the door? Shall Gehazi tell a lie, and comfort himself with an imagination of his master's ignorance, as long as God knows it? Whatsoever works men do are not hid from God, whether done in the midnight darkness, or the noon-day sun. He is all eye to see, and he hath great wrath to punish: the wheels in Ezekiel are full of eyes; a piercing eye to behold the sinner, and a swift wheel of wrath to overtake him. God is light, and above all things light is most difficultly kept out. The *secretest sins are set in the light of his countenance*, as legible to him as if writ with a sun beam; more visible to him than the greatest print to the sharpest eye. The fornications of the Samaritan woman, perhaps known only to her own conscience, were manifest to Christ. There is nothing so secretly done but there is an infallible witness to prepare a charge. Though God be invisible to us, we must not imagine we are so to him; it is vanity therefore to think, we can conceal ourselves from God, by concealing the notions of

God from our sense and practice. If men be as close from the eyes of all men, as from those of the sun; yea, if they could separate themselves from their own shadow, they could not draw themselves from God's understanding. How then can darkness shelter us, or crafty artifices defend us? With what shame will sinners be filled, when God, who hath traced their steps, and writ their sins in a book, shall make a repetition of their ways, and unvail the web of their wickedness.

2. What a dreadful consideration is this to the juggling hypocrite, that masks himself with *an appearance of piety?* An infinite understanding judges not according to the vails and shadows, but according to truth; *he judges not according to appearance.* 1 *Sam.* 16. 7. The outward comeliness of a work imposes not on his knowledge, and therefore his estimations are quite of another nature than those of men. By this perfection God looks through the vail, and beholds the litter of abominations in the secrets of the soul; the true quality and principle of every work, and judges of them as they are, and not as they appear. Disguised pretexts cannot deceive him; the disguises are known afar off before they are weaved, he pierceth into the depths of the most abstruse wills; all secret ends are dissected before him: every action is naked in its outside, and open in its inside, all are as clear to him as if their bodies were of chrystal, so that if there be any secret reserves, he will *certainly reprove us. Job* 13. 10. We are often deceived, we may take wolves for sheep, and hypocrites for believers; for the eyes of men are no better than flesh, and dive no further than appearance: but an infinite understanding, that fathoms the secret depths of the heart, is too knowing to let a dream pass for a truth, or mistake a shadow for a body.

Though we call God Father all our days, speak the language of angels, or be endowed with the gift of miracles, he can discern whether we have his mark upon us; he can espy the treason of Judas in a kiss; Herod's intent of murdering under a specious pretence of worship: a pharisee's fraud under a broad phylactery: a ravenous wolf under the softness of a sheep's skin; and

the devil in Samuel's mantle, or when he would shroud himself among the sons of God, *Job* 1. 6, 7. All the rooms of the heart, and every atom of dust in the least chink of it is clear to his eye: he can strip sin from the fairest excuses, pierce into the heart with more ease than the sun can through the thinnest cloud or vapour; and look through all Ephraim's ingenious inventions to excuse his idolatry. *Hos.* 5. 3. Hypocrisy then is a senseless thing, since it cannot escape unmasking, by an infinite understanding. As all our force cannot stop his arm, when he is resolved to punish; so all our sophistry cannot blind his understanding, when he comes to judge. Woe to the hypocrite, for God sees him; all his juggling is open and naked to infinite understanding.

3. Is it not also a senseless thing, to be careless of *sins committed long ago?* The old sins forgotten by men, stick fast in an infinite understanding: time cannot raze out that which hath been known from eternity. Why should they be forgotten many years after they were acted, since they were foreknown in eternity before they were committed, or the criminal capable to practice them? Amalek must pay their arrears of their ancient unkindness to Israel in the time of Saul, though the generation that committed them were rotten in their graves. Old sins are *written in a book*, 1 *Sam.* 15. 2, which lies always before God; and not only our own sins, but the *sins of our fathers*, to be requited upon their posterity. *Isa.* 65. 6. What a vanity is it then to be regardless of the sins of an age that went before us; because they are in some measure out of our knowledge, are they therefore blotted out of God's remembrance? Sins are bound up with him, as men do bonds, till they resolve to sue for the debt; *the iniquity of Ephraim is bound up. Hos.* 13. 12. As his fore-knowledge extends to all acts that shall be done, so his remembrance extends to all acts that have been done. We may as well say, God foreknows nothing that shall be done to the end of the world, as that he forgets any thing that hath been done from the beginning of the world. The former ages of the world are no further distant from him than the latter. God hath a calendar,

or an account book of men's sins ever since the beginning of the world, what they did in their childhood, what in their youth, what in their manhood, and what in their old age. He hath them *in store among his treasure, Deut.* 32. 34, 35. He hath neither lost his understanding to know them, nor his resolution to revenge them: as it follows, *to me vengeance belongs.* He intends to enrich his justice with a glorious manifestation, by rendering a due recompence. And it is to be observed, that God doth not only necessarily remember them, but sometimes binds himself by an oath to do it, *The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, surely I will not forget any of their works, Amos* 8. 7. Or in the Hebrew, *If I ever forget any of their works;* that is, let me not be accounted a God for ever, if I do forget; let me lose my godhead, if I lose my remembrance. It is not less a misery to the wicked than it is a comfort to the godly, that their record is in heaven.

4. Let it be observed, that this infinite understanding exactly knows the sins of men, *he knows so as to consider.* He not only knows them, but intently beholds them, *his eye-lids try the children of men, Psa.* 11. 4; a metaphor taken from men, that contract the eye-lids when they would accurately behold a thing; it is not a transient and careless look. *Thou hast seen it, Psal.* 10. 14; thou hast intently beheld it, as the word properly signifies: he beholds and knows the actions of every particular man, as if there were none but he in the world. And doth not only know, but *ponder, Prov.* 5. 21, and *consider their works, Psa.* 33. 15. He is not a bare spectator, but a diligent observer. *By him actions are weighed,* 1 *Sam.* 2. 3; to see what degree of good or evil there is in them, what there is to blemish them, what to advantage them, what the quality and quantity of every action is. Consideration takes in every circumstance of the considered object: notice is taken of the place where, the minute when, the mercy against which it is committed; the number of them is exact in God's book; *they have tempted me now these ten times, Numb.* 14. 22, against the demonstrations of my glory in Egypt and the wilderness.

The whole guilt in every circumstance is spread before him: his knowledge of men's sins is not confused, such an imperfection an infinite understanding cannot be subject to, it is exact, for *iniquity is marked before him. Jer.* 2. 22.

5. God knows men's miscarriage so *as to judge.* This use his omniscience is put to, to maintain his sovereign authority in the exercise of his justice: his notice of the sins of men is in order to a just retribution. *Thou hast seen mischief to requite it with thy hand, Psa.* 10. 14. The eye of his knowledge directs the hand of his justice; and no sinful action that falls under his cognizance, but will fall under his revenge; they can as little escape his censure as they can his knowledge: he is a witness in his omniscience, that he may be a judge in his righteousness: *he knows the hearts of the wicked,* so as to hate their works, and testify his abhorrence of that which is of *high value with men. Luke* 16. 15. Sin is not preserved in his understanding, or written down in his book to be moth-eaten as an old manuscript, but to be opened one day, and copied out in the consciences of men: he writes them to publish them, and sets them in the light of his countenance, to bring them to the light of their consciences. What a terrible consideration is it to think that the sins of a day are upon record in an infallible understanding, much more the sins of a week; what a number then do the sins of a month, a year, ten or forty years arise to? How many actions against charity, against sincerity; what an infinite number is there of them, all bound up in the court rolls of God's omniscience, in order to trial, to be brought out before the eyes of men? Who can seriously consider all those bonds, reserved in the cabinet of God's knowledge to be sued out against the sinner in due time, without an inexpressible horror?

4. The fourth use of this exhortation. Let us have a *sense of God's knowledge upon our hearts.* All wickedness springs from want of a due consideration and sense of it. David concludes it so, *The proud rose against him, and violent men sought after his soul,* because they did *not set God before them, Psal.* 86. 14. They think God doth not

know, and therefore care not what, nor how they act. When the fear of this attribute is removed, a door is opened to all impiety. What is there so villanous but the minds of men will attempt to act? What reverence of a Deity can be left when the sense of his infinite understanding is extinguished? What faith could there be in judgments in witnesses? How would the foundations of human society be overturned; the pillars upon which commerce stands be utterly broken and dissolved? What society can be preserved, if this be not truly believed and faithfully stuck to? But how easily would oaths be swallowed and quickly violated, if the sense of this perfection were rooted out of the minds of men? What fear could they have of calling to witness a Being they imagine blind and ignorant? Men secretly imagine that *God knows not*, or *soon forgets*, and then make *bold* to sin against him. How much does it therefore concern us to cherish and keep alive the sense of this? If God *writes us upon the palms of his hands*, as the expression is, to remember us, let us engrave him upon the tables of our hearts to remember him. It would be a good motto to write upon our minds, God knows all, he is of infinite understanding.

1. This would give *check* to much iniquity. Can a man's conscience easily and delightfully swallow that which he is sensible falls under the cognizance of God, when it is hateful to the eye of his holiness, and renders the actor odious to him? *Doth he not see my ways, and count all my steps*, saith Job, chap. 41. 4. To what end doth he fix this consideration? To keep him from wanton glances; temptations have no encouragement to come near him that is constantly armed with the thoughts that his sin is booked in God's omniscience. If any impudent devil hath the face to tempt us, we should not have the impudence to join issue with him under the sense of an infinite understanding. How fruitless would his wiles be against this consideration? How easily would his snares be broken by one sensible thought of this? This Solomon prescribes to allay the heat of *carnal imaginations*, *Prov.* 5. 20, 21. It were a useful question to ask, at the appearance of every

temptation, at the entrance upon every action, as the church did in temptations to idolatry; *Shall not God search this out, for he knows the secrets of the heart, Psal.* 44. 21. His understanding comprehends us more than our consciences can our acts, or our understanding our thoughts. Who durst speak treason against a prince, if he were sure he heard him, or that it would come to his knowledge? A sense of God's knowledge of wickedness in the first motion, and inward contrivance would bar the accomplishment and execution. The consideration of God's infinite understanding would cry *Stand*, to the first glances of the heart to sin.

2. It would *make us watchful* over our hearts and thoughts. Should we harbour any unworthy thoughts in our cabinet, if our heads and hearts were possessed with this useful truth, that *God knows every thing which comes into our minds, Ezek.* 11. 5. We should as much blush at the rising of impure thoughts before the understanding of God, as at the discovery of unworthy actions to the knowledge of men: If we lived under a sense, that not a thought of all those millions which flutter about our minds can be concealed from him; how watchful and careful should we be of our hearts and thoughts?

3. It would be a good *preparation* to every duty. This consideration should be the preface to every service; the divine understanding knows how I now act. This would engage us to serious intention, and quell wandering and distracting fancies; who would come before God with a careless and ignorant soul, under a sense of his infinite understanding, and prerogative of searching the heart? *O thou that sittest in heaven*, was a consideration the psalmist had at the beginning of his prayer, *Psal.* 123. 1. Whereby he testifies not only an apprehension of the majesty and power of God, but of his omniscience; as one sitting above beholds all that is below; would we offer to God such raw and undigested petitions; would there be so much flatness in our services; should our hearts so often wander; would any hang down their heads like a bulrush, by an affected or counterfeit humility, while the heart is filled with pride, if we

actuated faith in this attribute? No, our prayers would be more sound, our devotions more vigorous, our hearts more close, our spirits like the chariots of Aminadab, more swift in their motions; every thing would be done by us with all our might, which would be very feeble and faint, if we conceived God to be of a finite understanding like ourselves. Let us therefore before every duty, not draw, but open the curtains between God and our souls, and think that we are going before him that sees us, before him that knows us. And the stronger impressions of the divine knowledge are upon our minds, the better would our preparation be for, and the more active our frames in every service; and certainly we may judge of the suitableness of our preparations, by the strength of such impressions upon us.

4. This would tend to make us *sincere in our whole course.* This prescription David gave to Solomon, to maintain a soundness and health of spirit in his walk before God; *And thou, Solomon my son, know the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart, for the Lord understands all the imaginations of the thoughts,* 1 *Chron.* 28. 9. Josephus gives this reason for Abel's holiness, that he believed God was ignorant of nothing. * As the doctrine of omniscience is the foundation of all religion; so the impression of it would promote the practice of all religion. When *all* our *ways are* imagined by us to be *before* the Lord, we shall then *keep his precepts, Psal.* 119. 168. And we can never be perfect or sincere, till we *walk before God, Gen.* 17. 1, as under the eye of God's knowledge. What we speak, what we think, what we act is in his sight; he knows every place where we are, every thing that we do, as well as Christ knew Nathaniel under the fig-tree. As he is too powerful to be vanquished, so he is too understanding to be deceived; the sense of this would make us walk with as much care, as if the understanding of all men comprehended us and our actions.

5. The consideration of this attribute would make us

* Antiquit, lib. 1. cap. 3.

humble. How dejected would a person be, if he were sure all the angels in heaven and men upon earth, perfectly knew his crimes, with all their aggravations? But what is created knowledge to an infinite and just censuring understanding? When we consider that he knows our actions, whereof there are multitudes, and our thoughts, whereof there are millions; that he views all the blessings bestowed upon us; all the injuries we have returned to him; that he exactly knows his own bounty, and our ingratitude; all the idolatry, blasphemy, and secret enmity in every man's heart against him; all tyrannical oppressions, hidden lusts, omissions of necessary duties, violation of plain precepts, every foolish imagination, with all the circumstances of them, and that perfectly in their full anatomy, every mite of unworthiness and wickedness in every circumstance; and add to this his knowledge, the wonders of his patience, which are miraculous upon the score of his omniscience, that he is not as quick in his revenge, as he is in his understanding; but is so far from inflicting punishment, that he continues his former benefits, arms not his justice against us, but solicits our repentance, and waits to be gracious with all this knowledge of our crimes; should not the consideration of this melt our hearts into humiliation before him, and make us earnest in begging forgiveness of him?

Again, do we not all find a worm in our best fruit, a flaw in our soundest duties? Shall any of us vaunt, as if God beheld only the gold, and not any dross; as if he knew one thing only, and not another? If we knew something by ourselves to cheer us, do we not also know something, yea, many things to condemn us, and therefore to humble us? Let the sense of God's infinite knowledge therefore be an incentive and argument for more humiliation in us. If we know enough to render ourselves vile in our own eyes, how much more doth God know to render us vile in his!

6. The consideration of this excellent perfection should make us to *acquiesce* in God, *and rely upon him* in every strait. In public, in private: he knows all cases, and he

knows all remedies; he knows the seasons of bringing them, and he knows the seasons of removing them, for his own glory. What is contingent in respect of us, and of our fore-knowledge, and in respect of second causes, is not so in regard of God's, who hath the knowledge of the futurition of all things. He knows all causes in themselves, and therefore knows what every cause will produce, what will be the event of every counsel and of every action. How should we commit ourselves to this God of infinite understanding, who knows all things, and foreknows every thing, that cannot be forced through ignorance to take new counsel, or be surprized with any thing that can happen to us? This use the Psalmist makes of it, *Thou hast seen it, the poor committeth himself unto thee, Psal.* 10. 14; though *some trust in chariots and horses,* some in counsel and counsellors, some in their arms and courage, and some in mere vanity and nothing, yet let us *remember the name* and nature of *the Lord our God,* his divine perfections, of which this of his infinite understanding and omniscience is none of the least, but so necessary, that without it he could not be God, and the whole world would be a mere chaos and confusion.

THE

WISDOM OF GOD.

Rom. 16. 27.

TO GOD ONLY WISE, BE GLORY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST FOR EVER. AMEN.

PART I.

REMARKS, PROPOSITIONS, AND ARGUMENTS, ON THE WISDOM OF GOD.

General observations—Satanic character of wicked men—Satan to be subdued by the Saviour of the world—Truth victorious—Faith looks to the foundation of the promises—Leaves the season of accomplishment to divine wisdom—The attributes of God bear a comfortable aspect to believers—Their stability depends upon the wisdom of God—Perseverance in grace a gospel doctrine—The gospel the sole means of the Christian establishment—The gospel the revelation of Christ—The excellence of the gospel—An everlasting gospel—Divine truth mysterious—Connection of the old and new testaments—All truth to be derived from scripture—Goodness of God—Holiness of the gospel—Acceptable obedience—Faith and obedience distinct—Inseparable—Commentary on the text.

THIS chapter being the last of this epistle, is chiefly made up of charitable and friendly salutations and commendations of particular persons, according to the earliness and strength of their several graces, and their labour of love for the interest of God and his people. In ver.

17, he warns them not to be drawn aside from the gospel doctrine which had been taught them, by the plausible pretences and insinuations, which the corrupters of the doctrine and rule of Christ never want from the suggestions of their carnal wisdom. The advocates of soul-destroying errors may walk about the world in disguise, and by *good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple*, ver. 18; and for their encouragement to a constancy in the gospel doctrine, he assures them, that all who would dispossess them of truth to possess them with vanity, are but Satan's instruments, and will fall under the same captivity and yoke with their principal; *The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly*, ver. 20.

Whence observe, 1. All corrupters of divine truth, and troublers of the church's peace, are *no better than devils.* Our Saviour thought the name *Satan* a title merited by Peter, when he breathed out advice which was as an axe at the root of the gospel, the death of Christ, the foundation of all gospel truth; and the apostle concludes them under the same character which hinder the superstructure, and would mix their chaff with his wheat; *Get thee behind me, Satan, Matt.* 16. 23. It is not, get thee behind me, Simon; or, get thee behind me, Peter; but, *Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence to me:* thou dost oppose thyself to the wisdom, and grace, and authority of God, to the redemption of man, and to the good of the world. As the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of truth, so is Satan the spirit of falsehood. As the Holy Ghost inspires believers with truth, so doth the devil corrupt unbelievers with error. Let us cleave to the truth of the gospel, that we may not be counted as part of the corporation of fallen angels, and not be barely reckoned as enemies of God, but in league with the greatest enemy to his glory in the world.

2. The reconciler of the world will be *the subduer of Satan.* The God of peace sent *the Prince of peace* to be the restorer of his rights, and to beat in pieces the usurper of them. As a God of truth he will make good his promise; as a God of peace he will perfect the design his wisdom has laid, and begun to perform. In subduing

Satan he will be the conqueror of his instruments; he saith not, God shall bruise your troublers and heretics, but *Satan.* The fall of a general proves the rout of the army. Since God, as a *God of peace,* hath delivered his own, he will perfect the victory, and make them cease from bruising the heel of his spiritual seed.

3. Divine evangelical truth shall be *victorious.* No weapon formed against it shall prosper. The head of the wicked shall fall as low as the feet of the godly. The devil never yet blustered in the world, but he met at last with disappointment. His fall has been like *lightning,* sudden, certain, vanishing.

4. Faith must look back as far as *the foundation promise.* The God of *peace shall bruise Satan.* The apostle seems to allude to the first promise, *Gen.* 2. 15. A promise that hath vigour to nourish the church in all ages of the world: it is the standing cordial; out of this promise all the rest have taken their birth. The promises of the Old Testament were designed for those under the New, and the full performance of them is to be expected, and will be enjoyed by them. It is a mighty strengthening to faith, to trace the footsteps of God's truth and wisdom, from the threatening against the serpent in Eden, to the bruise he received in Calvary, and the triumph over him upon mount Olivet.

5. We are to confide in the promise of God, but *leave the season of its accomplishment to his wisdom.* He will *bruise Satan under your feet,* therefore do not doubt it; and *shortly,* therefore wait for it. Shortly it will be done, that is, quickly, when you think it may be a great way off; or shortly, that is, seasonably, when Satan's rage is hottest. God is the best judge of the seasons of distributing his own mercies, and revealing his own glory. It is enough to encourage our waiting, that it will be, and that it will be shortly; but we must not measure God's *shortly* by our minutes.

The apostle after this concludes with a comfortable prayer, that since they were liable to many temptations, to turn their backs upon the doctrine which they had learned; yet he desires God, who had brought them to

the knowledge of his truth, would confirm them in the belief of it, since it was the gospel of Christ, his dear Son, and a mystery he had kept in his own cabinet, and now brought forth to the world in pursuance of the ancient prophesies, and now had published to all nations for that end that it might be obeyed; and concludes with a doxology of praise, *to him who was only wise* to effect his own purposes; *Now to him that is of power to establish you, according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began; but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith*, ver. 25, 26, 27. This doxology is interlaced with many comforts for the Romans; he explains the causes of this glory to God, *power* and *wisdom;* power to establish the Romans in grace, which includes his will. This he proves from a divine testimony, viz. the gospel; the gospel committed to him, and preached by him, which he commends by calling it the *preaching of Christ;* and describes it, for the instruction and comfort of the church, from the adjuncts, the obscurity of it under the old testament, and the clearness of it under the new. It was hid from the former ages, and kept in silence; not simply and absolutely, but comparatively and in part; because in the old testament, the doctrine of salvation by Christ was confined to the limits of Judea, and was preached only to the inhabitants of that country; *To them he gave his statutes and his judgments, and dealt not so magnificently with any nation, Psal.* 147. 19, 20; but now he causes it to spring with greater majesty out of those narrow bounds, and spread its wings about the world. This manifestation of the gospel he declares first from the subject, *all nations.* 2. From the principal efficient cause of it, the *commandment* and order of God: 3. The instrumental cause, the prophetic scriptures: 4. From the end of it, *the obedience of faith.**

1. Observe, the glorious attributes of God bear *a com-*

* Gomatus in loc.

fortable respect to believers. Power and wisdom are here mentioned as two props of their faith; his power here includes his goodness. Power to help, without will to assist, is a dry source of comfort. The apostle mentions not God's power simply and absolutely considered, for that of itself is no more comfort to men than it is to devils; but as considered in the gospel covenant, his power, as well as his other perfections, are ingredients in that cordial of God's being *our God.* We should never think of the excellency of the divine nature, without considering the duties they demand, and gathering the honey they present.

2. Observe the stability of a gracious soul *depends upon the wisdom, as well as the power of God.* It would be a disrepute to the omnipotence of God, if that should be totally vanquished which was introduced by his mighty arm, and rooted in the soul by irresistible grace. It would speak a want of strength to maintain it, or a change of resolution, and so would be no honour to the wisdom of his first design. It is no part of the wisdom of an artificer, to let a work wherein he determined to shew the greatness of his skill, to be dashed in pieces, when he had power to preserve it. God designed every gracious soul for a piece of *his workmanship*; and will not have the skill of his grace defeated. If any soul which he hath graciously conquered should be wrested from him, what could be thought, but that his power is enfeebled? If deserted by him, what could be imagined, but that he repented of his labour, and altered his counsel, as if rashly undertaken? These Romans were rugged spirits, and lay in a filthy quarry, for so the apostle represents them with the rest of the heathen, *Rom.* 1. 19. and would he throw them away, or leave them to the power of his enemy, after all the pains he had taken with them, to fit them for his building? Did he not foresee the designs of Satan against them; what stratagems he would use to defeat his purposes and strip him of the honour of his work; and would God so gratify his enemy, and disgrace his own wisdom? This would be deserting what hath been acted as a real repentance, and would argue imprudence in the first resolve and attempt.

The gospel is called the *manifold wisdom of God, Eph.* 3, 10, the fruit of it in the heart of any person, which is a main design of it, hath a title to the same character; and shall this grace, which is the product of this gospel, and therefore the birth of manifold wisdom, be suppressed? It is at God's hand we must seek our establishment, and act faith upon these two attributes of God. *Power* is no ground to expect stability, without *wisdom* interesting the agent in it, and finding out and applying the means for it. Wisdom is naked without power to act, and power is useless without wisdom to direct.

3. Observe, *perseverance* of believers in grace, is *a gospel doctrine. According to my gospel:* My gospel ministerially, according to that gospel doctrine I have taught you in this epistle; (for as the prophets were comments upon the law, so are the epistles upon the gospel:) This very doctrine he had discoursed of, *Rom.* 8, 38, 39, where he tells them, that neither *death* nor *life*, the terrors of a cruel death, or the allurements of an honourable and pleasant life, nor *principalities and powers*, with all their subtilty and strength; not the things we have before us, nor the promises of a future felicity; neither the angels in heaven, or devils in hell, shall be *able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.* So that, *according to my gospel*, may be according to that declaration of the gospel, which I have made in this epistle, which not only promises the first creating grace, but the perfecting and crowning grace; for not only the being of grace, but the health, liveliness, and perpetuity of grace is the fruit of the *new covenant, Jer.* 32. 40.

4. Observe, that the gospel is the sole means of a *christian's establishment.* According to my gospel, that is, by my gospel. The gospel is the instrumental cause of our spiritual life, it is the cause also of the continuance of it; it is the seed whereby we were born, and the milk whereby we are nourished, *it is the power of God to salvation*, and therefore to all the degrees of it. *Sanctify them by thy truth, John* 17. 17. or through thy truth; by or through his truth he sanctifies us, and by the same truth he establisheth us: the first sanctification, and the pro-

gress of it, the first lineaments and the last colours, are wrought by the gospel. The gospel therefore ought to be known, studied, and considered by us. It is the charter of our inheritance, and the security for our standing. The law acquaints us with our duty, but contributes nothing to our strength and settlement.

5. Observe, the gospel is nothing else but *the revelation of Christ*, ver. 25. According to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ: the discovery of the mystery, and redemption, and salvation, in and by him. It is Genitivis objecti, that preaching wherein Christ is declared and set out, with the benefits accruing by him. This is the privilege, the wisdom of God reserved for the latter times, which the old testament church had only under a veil.

6. Observe, it is a part of the excellency of the gospel, *that it had the Son of God for its publisher—the preaching of Jesus Christ.* It was first preached to Adam in Paradise by God, and afterwards published by Christ in person to the inhabitants of Judea. It was not the invention of man, but copied from the bosom of the Father by him that lay in his bosom. The gospel we have, is the same which our Saviour himself preached when he was in the world: he preached it not to the Romans; but the same gospel he preached is transmitted to the Romans. It therefore commands our respect; whoever slights it, it is as much as if he slighted Jesus Christ himself, were he in person to sound it from his own lips. The validity of a proclamation is derived from the authority of the prince that dictates it and orders it; yet the greater the person that publisheth it, the more dishonour is cast upon the authority of the prince that enjoins it, if it be contemned. The everlasting God ordained it, and the eternal Son published it.

7. Observe, the gospel was of an *eternal resolution*, though of *a temporary revelation*, ver. 25. *According to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.* It is an everlasting gospel. It was a promise *before the world began, Tit.* 1. 2. It was not a new invention, but only kept secret among the

Arcana, in the breast of the Almighty. It was hidden from angels, for the depths of it are not yet fully made known to them; their *desire to look into it*, speaks yet a deficiency in their knowledge of it, 1 *Pet.* 1. 12. It was published in Paradise, but in such words as Adam did not fully understand: it was both discovered and clouded in the smoke of sacrifices: it was wrapped up in a veil under the law, but not opened till the death of the Redeemer: it was then plainly said to the cities of Judah, *behold, your God comes.* The whole transaction of it between the Father and the Son, which is the spirit of the gospel, was from eternity; the creation of the world was in order to the manifestation of it. Let us not then regard the gospel as a novelty; the consideration of it, as one of God's cabinet rarities, should enhance our estimation of it. No traditions of men, no invention of vain wits that pretend to be wiser than God, should have the same credit with that which bears date from eternity.

8. Observe, that divine truth is *mysterious.* According to the revelation of the mystery, Christ manifested in the flesh. The whole scheme of godliness is a mystery. No man or angel could imagine how two natures so distant as the divine and human should be united; how the same person should be criminal and righteous; how a just God should have a satisfaction and sinful man a justification; how the sin should be punished and the sinner saved. None could imagine such a way of justification, as the apostle in this epistle declares: it was a mystery when hid under the shadows of the law, and a mystery to the prophets, when it sounded from their mouths; they searched it without being able to comprehend it, 1 *Pet.* 1. 10, 11.

If it be a mystery, it is humbly to be submitted to: mysteries surmount human reason. The study of the gospel must not be with a yawning and careless frame. Trades you call mysteries, are not learned sleeping and nodding; diligence is required, we must be disciples at God's feet. As it had God for the author, so we must have God for the teacher of it; the contrivance was his, and the illumination of our minds must be from him.

As God only manifested the gospel, so he only can open our eyes to see the mysteries of Christ in it.

In ver. 26, we may observe, 1. The scriptures of the Old Testament *verify the substance of the New, and the New evidences, the authority of the Old. By the scriptures of the prophets made known.* The Old Testament credits the New, and the New illustrates the Old. The New Testament is a comment upon the prophetic part of the Old. The Old shews the promises and predictions of God, and the New shews the performance: what was foretold in the Old is fulfilled in the New; the predictions are cleared by the events. The predictions of the Old are divine, because they are above the reason of man to foreknow: none but an infinite knowledge could foretel them, because none but an infinite wisdom could order all things for the accomplishment of them.

The christian religion hath then the surest foundation, since the scriptures of the prophets, wherein it is foretold, are of undoubted antiquity, and owned by the Jews and many heathens, which are, and were the great enemies of Christ. The Old Testament is therefore to be read for the strengthening of our faith. Our blessed Saviour himself draws the streams of his doctrine from the Old Testament: he clears up the promise of eternal life, and the doctrine of the resurrection, from the words of the covenant, *I am the God of Abraham, &c. Mat.* 22. 32. And our apostle clears up the doctrine of *justification by faith* from God's covenant with *Abraham, Rom.* 4. It must be read, and it must be read as it is written. It was written to a gospel end, it must be studied with a gospel spirit. The Old Testament was written to give credit to the New, when it should be manifested in the world. It must be read by us to give strength to our faith, and establish us in the doctrine of christianity. How many view it as a bare story, an almanack out of date, and regard it as a dry bone, without extracting from it the evangelical marrow? Christ is, in Genesis, Abraham's seed; in David's Psalms and the prophets, the Messiah and Redeemer of the world.

2. Observe the *antiquity* of the gospel is made mani-

fest *by the scriptures of the prophets.* It was of as ancient a date as any prophecy: the first prophecy was nothing else but a gospel charter; it was not made at the incarnation of Christ, but made *manifest.* It then rose up to its meridian lustre, and sprung out of the clouds, wherewith it was before obscured. The gospel was preached to the ancients by the *Prophets,* as well as to the *Gentiles* by the *Apostles; Heb.* 4. 2. *Unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them.* To them first, to us after; to them indeed more cloudy, to us more clear; but they as well as we, were *Evangelized,* as the word signifies.

The covenant of grace was the same in the writings of the prophets, and the declarations of the evangelists and apostles. Though by our Saviour's incarnation, the gospel light was clearer, and by his ascension the effusions of the spirit fuller and stronger; yet the believers under the Old Testament, saw Christ in the swaddling bands of legal ceremonies, and the lattice of prophetical writings; they could not offer one sacrifice, or read one prophecy with a faith of the right stamp. Abraham's justifying faith had Christ for its object, though it was not so explicit as ours, because the manifestation was not so clear as ours.

3. Observe, *all truth is to be drawn from scripture.* The apostle refers them here to the gospel and the prophets: the scripture is the source of divine knowledge, not the traditions of men, nor reason separate from scripture. Whosoever brings another doctrine, would set up another Christ; nothing is to be added to what is written, nothing detracted from it. He doth not send us for truth, to the puddles of human inventions, to the enthusiasms of our brain, nor to the see of Rome, no nor to the instructions of angels; but the writings of the prophets, as they clear up the declarations of the apostles. The church of Rome is not made here the standard of truth; but the scriptures of the prophets are to be the touchstone to the Romans, for the trial of the truth of the gospel.

4. Observe, how great is *the goodness of God?* The

borders of grace are enlarged to the Gentiles, and not hid under the skirts of the Jews. He that was so long the God of the Jews, is now also manifest to be the God of the Gentiles. *The gospel is now made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God.* Not only in a way of common providence, but special grace; in calling them to the knowledge of himself, and to justification by faith; he hath brought strangers to the adoption of children, and lodged them under the wings of the covenant, that were before alienated from him through the universal corruption of nature. Now he hath manifested himself a God of truth, mindful of his promise in blessing all nations in the seed of Abraham. The fury of devils, and the violence of men, could not hinder the propagation of this gospel; its light hath been dispersed as far as that of the sun; and that grace that sounded in the Gentiles' ears, hath bent many of their hearts to the obedience of it.

5. Observe, that libertinism and licentiousness *find no encouragement in the gospel. It was made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.* The goodness of God is published, that our enmity to him may be parted with. Christ's righteousness is not offered to us to be put on, that we may roll more warmly in our sins. The doctrine of grace commands us to give up ourselves to Christ to be accepted through him, and to be ruled by him. Obedience is due to God, as a sovereign in his law; and it is due out of gratitude, as he is a God of grace in the gospel. The discovery of a further perfection in God weakens not the right of another, nor the obligation of the duty the former attribute claims at our hands. The gospel frees us from the curse, but not from the duty and service; *We are delivered from the hands of our enemies, that we might serve God in holiness and righteousness, Luke* 1. 74. *This is the will of God* in the gospel, *even our sanctification.* When a prince strikes off a malefactor's chains, though he deliver him from the punishments of his crime, he frees him not from the duty of a subject; his pardon adds a greater obligation than his protection did before while he was loyal.

Christ's righteousness gives us a title to heaven; but there must be holiness to give us a fitness for heaven.

6. Observe, that evangelical obedience, or the obedience of faith is only acceptable to God. Obedience of faith; *genitivus speciei*, noting the kind of obedience God requires; an obedience springing from faith, animated and influenced by faith. Not obedience of faith, as though faith were the rule, and the law were abrogated; but to the law as a rule, and from faith as a principle. There is no true obedience before faith; *Without faith it is impossible to please God, Heb.* 11. 6, and therefore without faith impossible to obey him. A good work cannot proceed from a defiled mind and conscience; and without faith every man's mind is darkened, and his conscience polluted, *Tit.* 1. 15. Faith is the band of union to Christ, and obedience is the fruit of union; we *cannot bring forth fruit* without being branches, and we cannot be branches without believing, *John* 15. 4, 5. Legitimate fruit follows upon union to Christ, not before it: *That you should be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead, that you should bring forth fruit unto God, Rom.* 7, 4. All fruit before marriage is bastard, and bastards were excluded from the sanctuary. Our persons must be first accepted in Christ, before our services can be acceptable; those works are not acceptable where the person is not pardoned. Good works flow from a pure heart; but the heart cannot be pure before faith. All the good works reckoned up in the 11th chapter of the Hebrews were from this spring; those heroes first believed, and then obeyed. *By faith Abel was righteous before God*, without it his sacrifice had been no better than Cain's; *By faith Enoch pleased God*, and had a divine testimony to his obedience before his translation; *By faith, Abraham offered up Isaac*, without which he had been no better than a murderer. All obedience hath its root in faith, and is not done in our own strength, but in the strength and virtue of another, of Christ, whom God hath set forth as our head and root.

7. Observe, faith and obedience are *distinct*, though

inseparable. The obedience of faith. Faith indeed is obedience to a gospel command, which enjoins us to believe; but it is not all our obedience. Justification and sanctification are distinct acts of God; justification respects the person, sanctification the nature; justification is first in order of nature, and sanctification follows. They are distinct but inseparable; every justified person hath a sanctified nature, and every sanctified nature supposeth a justified person. So faith and obedience are distinct; faith as the principle, obedience as the product; faith as the cause, obedience as the effect; the cause and the effect are not the same. By faith we own Christ as our Lord; by obedience we regulate ourselves according to his command. The acceptance of the relation to him as a subject, precedes the performance of our duty; by faith we receive his law, and by obedience we fulfil it. Faith makes us God's *children, Gal.* 3. 26. Obedience manifests us to be Christ's disciples, *John* 15. 8. Faith is the touchstone of obedience; the touchstone, and that which is tried by it, are not the same. But though they are distinct, yet they are inseparable. Faith and obedience are joined together; obedience closely follows faith. Faith *purifies the heart*, and a pure heart cannot be without pure actions. Faith unites us to Christ, whereby we partake of his life; and a living branch cannot be without *fruit* in its season, and *much fruit, John* 15. 5, and that naturally from *a newness of Spirit, Rom.* 7. 9, not constrained by the rigours of the law, but drawn forth from a sweetness of love; for *faith works by love.* The love of God is the strong motive, and love to God is the quickening principle; as there can be no obedience without faith, so no faith without obedience.

After all this, the apostle ends with the celebration of the wisdom of God; *to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever.* The rich discovery of the gospel, cannot be thought of by a gracious soul, without returns of praise to God, and admiration of his singular wisdom.

Wise God. His power before, and his wisdom here,

are mentioned in conjunction, in which his goodness is included, as interested in his establishing power, as the ground of all the glory and praise God hath from his creatures.

Only wise. As Christ saith, *none is good, but God, Mat.* 19. 17; so the apostle saith, none wise, but God. As all creatures are unclean in regard of his purity; so they are all fools in regard of his wisdom, yea the glorious angels themselves, *Job* 4. 18. Wisdom is the royalty of God; the proper dialect of all his ways and works. No creature can lay claim to it; he is so wise, that he is wisdom itself.

Be glory through Jesus Christ. As God is only known in and by Christ, so he must be only worshipped and celebrated in and through Christ. In him we must pray to him, and in him we must praise him. As all mercies flow from God through Christ to us, so all our duties are to be presented to God through Christ.

In the Greek, *verbatim*, it runs thus; *to the alone wise God through Jesus Christ, to him be glory for ever.* But we must not understand it, as if God were wise by Jesus Christ; but that thanks is to be given to God through Christ, because in and by Christ God hath revealed his wisdom to the world. The Greek hath a repetition of the article ᾧ not expressed in the translation, *to him be glory.* Beza expunges this article, but without reason, for ᾧ is as much as ἀυτῷ, *to him;* and joining this, *the only wise God* with the 25th verse, *to him that is of power to establish you;* reading it thus, *to him that is of power to establish you, the only wise God,* leaving the rest in a parenthesis, it runs smoothly, *to him be glory through Jesus Christ.* And Crellius, the Socinian, observes, that this article ᾧ, which some leave out, might be industriously inserted by the apostle, to shew, that the glory we ascribe to God, is also given to Christ.

We may observe further, that neither in this place, nor any where in scripture, is the Virgin Mary, or any of the saints, associated with God or Christ in the glory ascribed to them.

In the words there is,—1. An appropriation of wisdom to God, and a remotion of it from all creatures; *only wise God.* 2. A glorifying him for it.

PART II.

THE TRANSCENDENT EXCELLENCY OF DIVINE WISDOM.

Division of the subject---Definition of wisdom---In what it consists---Essential and personal wisdom of God---Wisdom the same with his essence---His property alone---God only wise necessarily---Originally---Perfectly---Universally---Perpetually---Incomprehensibly----Infallibly wise---Arguments to prove that he is the only wise God---His infinite perfection---Government of the world---The creatures subservient to his purposes---God is the fountain of all wisdom in the creatures.

WE have before spoken of the knowledge of God, and the infinity of it: the next attribute is the wisdom of God. Most confound the knowledge and wisdom of God together; but there is a manifest distinction between them in our conception. I shall handle it thus;—1. Shew what wisdom is. Then lay down, 2. Some propositions about the wisdom of God. And shew, 3. That God is wise, and only wise. 4. Wherein his wisdom appears. 5. The inferences deducible from his wisdom. 6. The believer's obligations relative to the wisdom of God.

I. *What wisdom is.* Wisdom among the Greeks, first

signified an eminent perfection in any art or mystery; so a good statuary, engraver, or limner, was called wise, as having an excellent knowledge in his particular art. But afterwards the title of wise was appropriated to those that devoted themselves to the contemplation of the highest things, that served for a foundation to speculative sciences.* But ordinarily we count a man a wise man, when he conducts his affairs with discretion, and governs his passions with moderation, and carries himself with a due proportion and harmony in all his concerns.

But in particular, wisdom consists,---1. In acting for *a right end.* The chief part of prudence is in fixing a right end, and in chusing fit means, and directing them to that scope: to shoot at random is a mark of folly. As he is the wisest men, that hath the noblest end and fittest means; so God is infinitely wise; as he is the most excellent being, so he hath the most excellent end. As there is none more excellent than himself, nothing can be his end but himself: as he is the cause of all, so he is the end of all; and he puts a true bias into all the means he uses to reach the mark he aims at: *Of him, and through him, and to him are all things, Rom.* 11. 36.

2. Wisdom consists, in *observing all circumstances* for action. He is counted a wise man, that lays hold of the fittest opportunities to bring his designs about, that hath the fullest foresight of all the little intrigues which may happen in a business he is to manage, and times every part of his action in an exact harmony with the proper minutes of it. God hath all the circumstances of things in one entire image before him; he hath a prospect of every little creek in any design. He sees what second causes will act, and when they will act this or that; yea, he determines them to such and such acts; so that it is impossible he should be mistaken, or miss of the due season of bringing about his own purposes. As he hath more goodness than to deceive any; so he hath more understanding, than to be mistaken in any thing. Hence the time of the incarnation of our blessed Saviour, is

* Amyraut. Moral, tom. 3, p. 123.

called the *fulness of time*, the proper season for his coming. Every circumstance about Christ was timed according to the predictions of God; even so little a thing as *not parting his garment*, and the giving him *gall and vinegar to drink:* and all the blessings he showers down upon his people, according to the covenant of grace, are said to come *in his due season*, *Ezek.* 34. 25, 26.

3. Wisdom consists, in willing and acting according to *the right reason*, according to *a right judgment of things*. We never count a wilful man a wise man, but him only that acts according to a right rule, when right counsels are taken and vigorously executed. The resolves and ways of God are not mere will, but will guided by the reason and counsel of his own infinite understanding; *who works all things according to the counsel of his own will. Eph.* 1. 11. The motions of the divine will are not rash, but follow the proposals of the divine mind: he chooses that which is fittest to be done, so that all his works are graceful, and all his ways have a comeliness and decorum in them. Hence all his ways are said to be *judgment*, *Deut.* 32. 4, not mere will.

Hence it appears, that wisdom and knowledge are two distinct perfections. Knowledge has its seat in the speculative understanding, wisdom in the practical. Wisdom and knowledge are evidently distinguished as *two* several gifts of the spirit in man, *to one is given by the spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same spirit.* 1 *Cor.* 12. 8. Knowledge is an understanding of general rules, and wisdom is a drawing conclusions from those rules in order to particular cases. A man may have the knowledge of the whole scripture, and have all learning in the treasury of his memory, and yet be destitute of skill to make use of them upon particular occasions, and untie those knotty questions which may be proposed to him, by a ready application of those rules.

Again, knowledge and wisdom may be distinguished in our conception, as two distinct perfections in God: the *knowledge* of God is his understanding of all things;

his *wisdom* is the skilful resolving and acting of all things. And the apostle, in his admiration of him, owns them as distinct, *Oh! the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, Rom.* 11. 33. Knowledge is the foundation of wisdom, and antecedent to it; wisdom the superstructure upon knowledge: men may have knowledge without wisdom, but not wisdom without knowledge, according to our common Proverb, "The greatest clerks are not the wisest men. All practical knowledge is founded in speculation, either *secundem rem*, as in a man: or *secundem rationem*, as in God. They agree in this, that they are both acts of the understanding; but knowledge is the apprehension of a thing, and wisdom is the appointing and ordering of it. Wisdom is the splendour and lustre of knowledge, shining forth in operations, and is an act both of understanding and will; understanding in counselling and contriving, will in resolving and executing: *Counsel* and *will* are linked together, *Ephes.* 1. 11.

II. The second thing is to lay down some propositions in general, concerning the wisdom of God.

1. There is an *essential* and a *personal* wisdom of God. The essential wisdom is the essence of God; the personal wisdom, is the Son of God. Christ is called *wisdom* by himself, *Luke* 7, 35. The *wisdom of God* by the Apostle, 1 *Cor.* 1. 24. The *wisdom* I speak of belongs to the nature of God, and is considered as a necessary perfection. The personal wisdom is called so, because he opens to us the secrets of God. If the Son were that wisdom whereby the Father is wise, the Son would be also the essence whereby the Father is God. If the Son were the wisdom of the Father, whereby he is essentially wise, the Son would be the essence of the Father, and the Father would have his essence from the Son, since the wisdom of God is the essence of God; and so the Son would be the Father, if the wisdom and power of the Father were originally in the Son.

2. Therefore, secondly, the wisdom of God is *the same with the essence of God.* Wisdom in God is not a habit added to his essence, as it is in man, but it is his

essence. It is like the splendour of the sun, the same with the sun itself; or like the brightness of *chrystal*, which is not communicated to it by any thing else, as the brightness of a mountain is by the beam of the sun, but it is one with the chrystal itself. It is not a habit superadded to the divine essence; that would be repugnant to the simplicity of God, and speak him compounded of divers principles; it would be contrary to the eternity of his perfections. If he be eternally wise, his wisdom is his essence; for there is nothing eternal but the essence of God. * As the sun melts some things and hardens others; blackens some things and whitens others, and produceth contrary qualities in different subjects; yet it is but one and the same quality in the sun, which is the cause of those contrary operations: so the perfections of God seem to be divers in our conceptions, yet they are but one and the same in God. The wisdom of God, is God acting prudently; as the power of God, is God acting powerfully; and the justice of God, is God acting righteously. And therefore it is more truly said, that God is *wisdom, justice, truth, power*, than that he is *wise, just, true, &c.* as if he were compounded of substance and qualities. All the operations of God proceed from one simple essence; as all the operations of the mind of man, though various, proceed from one faculty of understanding.

3. Wisdom is the property of *God alone.* He is only wise. It is an honour peculiar to him. Upon the account that no man deserved the title of wise, but that it was a royalty belonging to God†, Pythagoras would not be called Σοφὸς, a title given to their learned men; but Φιλόσοφος. The name philosopher, arose out of a respect to this transcendent perfection of God.

1. God is only wise *necessarily.* As he is necessarily God, so he is necessarily wise; for the notion of wisdom is inseparable from the notion of a Deity. When we say *God is a spirit*, is *true, righteous, wise;* we understand that he is transcendently these, by an intrinsic and absolute necessity, by virtue of his own essence, without the efficiency of any other, or any efficiency in and by him-

* Maimon. Mor. part. 1. cap. 53. † Laert. lib. 1. proem.

self. God doth not make himself wise, no more than he makes himself God. As he is a necessary being in regard of his life, so he is necessarily wise in regard of his understanding. Synesius saith, that God is essentiated, ἡσιῶθαι by his understanding. He places the substance of God in understanding and wisdom: wisdom is the first vital operation of God. He can no more be unwise than he can be untrue; for folly in the mind is much the same as falsity in speech. Wisdom among men is gained by age and experience, furthered by instructions and exercise; but the wisdom of God is his nature. As the sun cannot be without light, while it remains a sun; and as eternity cannot be without immortality; so neither can God be without wisdom. As *he only hath immortality*, 1 *Tim.* 6. 16, not arbitrarily, but necessarily; so he only hath wisdom: not because he will be wise, but because he cannot but be wise. He cannot but contrive counsels, and exert operations, becoming the greatness and majesty of his nature.

2. God is only wise *originally*. God is ἀνδίδακτος ἀυτὸσοφος. Men acquire wisdom by the loss of their fairest years; but his wisdom is the perfection of the divine nature, not the birth of study or the growth of experience, but as necessary, as eternal, as his essence. He goes not out of himself to search wisdom: he needs no more the brains of creatures in the contrivance of his purposes, than he does their arm in the execution of them. He needs no counsel, he receives no counsel from any; *Who hath been his counsellor? Rom.* 11. 34. and *With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, or taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the path of understanding? Isa.* 40. 14. He is the only fountain of wisdom to others; angels and men have what wisdom they have, by communication from him. All created wisdom is a spark of the divine light, like that of the stars borrowed from the sun. He that borrows wisdom from another, and does not originally possess it in his own nature, cannot properly be called wise. As God is the only being, in regard that all other beings are derived from him; so he is only wise, because all other

wisdom flows from him. He is the spring of wisdom to all; none the original of wisdom to him.

3. God is only wise *perfectly*. There is no cloud upon his understanding. He hath a distinct and certain knowledge of all things that can fall under action. As he hath a perfect knowledge without ignorance, so he hath a beautiful wisdom without deformity. Men are wise, yet have not an understanding so vast as to grasp all things; nor a perspicacity so clear, as to penetrate into the depths of all beings. Angels have more delightful and lively sparks of wisdom, yet so imperfect, that in regard of the wisdom of God they are *charged with folly*, *Job* 4. 18. Their wisdom as well as their holiness is veiled in the presence of God. It vanishes as the glowing of a fire before the beauty of the sun; or as a light of a candle in the midst of sunshine contracts itself, and none of its rays are seen, but in the body of the flame. The angels are not perfectly wise, because they are not perfectly knowing. The gospel, the great discovery of God's wisdom, was hid from them for ages.

4. God is only wise *universally*. Wisdom in one man is of one sort, in another of another sort; one is a wise tradesman, another a wise statesman, and another a wise philosopher. One is wise in the business of the world, another is wise in divine concerns. One hath not so much of plenty of one sort, but he may have a scantiness in another; one may be wise for invention, and foolish in execution; an artificer may have skill to frame an engine, and not skill to use it. The ground that is fit for olives, may not be fit for vines; that will bear one sort of grain and not another. But God hath an universal wisdom, because his nature is wise; it is not limited, but hovers over every thing shines in every being. His executions are as wise as his contrivances. He is wise in his resolves, and wise in his ways; wise in all the varieties of his works of creation, government, redemption. As his will wills all things, and his power effects all things; so his wisdom is the universal director of the motions of his will, and the executions of his power. As his righteousness is the measure of the matter of his actions, so

his wisdom is the rule that directs the manner of his actions. The absolute power of God is not an unruly power. His wisdom orders all things, so that nothing is done, but what is fit and convenient, and agreeable to so excellent a being. As he cannot do an unjust thing because of his righteousness, so he cannot do an unwise act because of his infinite wisdom. Though God be not necessitated to any operation without himself, as to the creation of any thing, yet supposing he will act, his wisdom necessitates him to do that which is congruous, as his righteousness necessitates him to do that which is just; so that though the will of God be the principle, yet his wisdom is the rule of his actions. We must in our conceiving of the order, suppose wisdom antecedent to will. None that acknowledges a God, can have such an impious thought as to affix temerity and rashness to any of his proceedings.

All his decrees are drawn out of the infinite treasury of wisdom in himself.* He resolves nothing about any of his creatures without reason; but the reason of his purposes is in himself, and springs from himself, and not from the creatures. There is not one thing that he wills, but *he wills by counsel, and works by counsel*, *Eph.* 1. 11. Counsel is written in every line, every letter, in his eternal book; and all the orders are drawn out from thence by his wisdom and will. What was illustrious in the contrivance, glitters in the execution. His understanding and will are infinite; what is therefore the act of his will is the result of his understanding, and therefore rational. His understanding and will are united; there is no contest in God; will against mind, and mind against will; they are one in God, one in his resolves, and one in all his works.

5. God is only wise *perpetually*. As the wisdom of man is got by ripeness of age, so it is lost by decay of years; it is got by instruction, and lost by dotage. The most perfect minds, when in the wane, have been darkened with folly: Nebuchadnezzar that was wise for a man,

* Polhil. against Sherlock, p. 377.

became as foolish as a brute. But the *Ancient of days* is an unchangeable possessor of prudence; his wisdom is a mirror of brightness, without a defacing spot. It was possessed by him *in the beginning of his ways, before his works of old, Prov.* 8. 22, and he can never be dispossessed of it in the end of his works. It is inseparable from him: the being of his godhead may as soon cease, as the beauty of his mind; *with him is wisdom, Job* 12. 13, it is inseparable from him, therefore as durable as his essence. It is a wisdom infinite, and therefore without increase or decrease in itself. The experience of so many ages in the government of the world, hath added nothing to the immensity of it; as the shining of the sun since the creation of the world, hath added nothing to the light of that glorious body. As ignorance never darkens his knowledge, so folly never disgraces his prudence: God infatuates men, but neither men nor devils can infatuate God; he is unerringly wise; his counsel does not vary and flatter; it is not one day one counsel, and another day another, but stands like an immoveable rock, or a mountain of brass. *The counsel of the Lord stands for ever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations, Psal.* 33. 11.

6. He is only *incomprehensibly* wise. His thoughts are *deep, Psal.* 92. 5. *His judgments unsearchable, his ways past finding out, Rom.* 11. 33. Depths that cannot be fathomed. A splendour more dazzling to our dim minds, than the light of the sun to our weak eyes. The wisdom of one man may be comprehended by another, and over comprehended; and often men are understood by others to be wiser in their actions, than they understand themselves to be. And the wisdom of one angel may be measured by another angel of the same perfection. But as the essence, so the wisdom of God is incomprehensible to any creature; God is only comprehended by God: the secrets of wisdom in God are double to the expressions of it in his works; *Canst thou by searching find out God. Job* 11. 6, 7. There is an unfathomable depth in all his decrees, in all his works; we cannot comprehend the reason of his works, much

less that of his decrees, and still less that in his nature; because his wisdom being infinite as well as his power, can no more act to the highest pitch than his power. As his power is not terminated by what he hath wrought, but he could give further testimonies of it; so neither is his wisdom, but he could furnish us with infinite expressions and pieces of his skill. As in his immensity, he is not bounded by the limits of place; in his eternity he is not measured by the minutes of time: in his power, he is not terminated with this or that number of objects; so in his wisdom, he is not confined to this or that particular mode of working: so that in regard of the reason of his actions, as well as the glory and majesty of his nature, he dwells in *unapproachable light*, 1 *Tim.* 6. 16, and whatsoever we understand of his wisdom in creation and providence, infinitely less than what he is in himself, and his own unbounded nature.

Many things in scripture are declared chiefly to be the acts of the divine will, yet we must not think that they were acts of mere will without wisdom, but they are represented so to us, because we are not capable of understanding the infinite reason of its acts; his sovereignty is more intelligible to us than his wisdom. We can better know the commands of a superior, and the laws of a prince, than understand the reason that gave birth to those laws. We may know the orders of the divine will, as they are published, but not the sublime reason of his will. Though election be an act of God's sovereignty, and he hath no cause from without to determine him; yet his infinite wisdom stood not silent while mere dominion acted. Whatsoever God doth, he doth wisely, as well as sovereignly; though that wisdom which lies in the secret places of the divine being, be as incomprehensible to us as the effects of his sovereignty and power in the world are visible. God can give a reason of his proceeding, and that drawn from himself, though we understand it not.

The causes of things visible lie hid from us; doth any man know how to distinguish the seminal virtue of a small seed from the body of it, and in what nook and

corner that lies, and what that is that spreads itself in so fair a plant, and so many flowers? Can we comprehend the justice of God's proceedings in the prosperity of the wicked, and the afflictions of the godly? Yet as we must conclude them the fruits of an unerring righteousness, so we must conclude all his actions the fruits of an unspotted wisdom, though the concatenation of all his counsels is not intelligible to us; for he is as essentially and necessarily wise, as he is essentially and necessarily good and righteous.

God is not only so wise that nothing more wise can be conceived, but he is more wise than can be imagined; something greater in all his perfections than can be comprehended by any creature. It is a foolish thing therefore to question that which we cannot comprehend: we should adore instead of disputing against it; and take it for granted, that God would not order any thing, were it not agreeable to the sovereignty of his wisdom, as well as that of his will. Though the reason of man proceed from the wisdom of God, yet there is more difference between the reason of man, and the wisdom of God, than between the light of the sun, and the feeble shining of the glow-worm; yet we presume to censure the ways of God, as if our purblind reason had a reach above him.

7. God is only wise *infallibly*. The wisest men meet with rubs in the way, that make them fall short of what they aim at; they often design, and fail; then begin again, and yet none of their counsels arrive at perfection. If the wisest angels lay a plot, they may be disappointed; for though they are higher and wiser than man, yet there is one higher and wiser than they, that can check their projects. God always compasseth his end, never fails of any thing he designs and aims at; all his undertakings are counsel and will; as nothing can resist the efficacy of his will, so nothing can countermine the skill of his counsel; *there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord, Prov.* 21. 30. He compasseth his ends by those actions of men and devils, wherein they think to cross him; they shoot at their own mark, and hit his. Lucifer's plot by divine wisdom fulfilled God's

purpose against Lucifer's mind. The counsel of redemption by Christ, the end of the creation of the world, was revealed to triumph over the serpent's temptation. God never mistakes the means, nor can there be any disappointments, to make him vary his counsels, and choose other means than he had before ordained. *His word that goeth forth of his mouth shall not return to him void, but it shall accomplish that which he pleases, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto he sent it, Isa.* 55. 11. What is said of his word, is true of his counsel, it shall prosper in the thing for which it is appointed; it cannot be defeated by all the legions of men and devils; *for as he thinks, so shall it come to pass; and as he hath purposed, so shall it stand; the Lord hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? Isa.* 14. 24, 27. The wisdom of the creature is a drop from the wisdom of God, and is like a drop to the ocean, and a shadow to the sun; and therefore is not able to mate the wisdom of God, which is infinite and boundless. No wisdom is exempted from mistakes, but the divine: he is wise in all his resolves, and never *calls back his words and purposes, Isa.* 31. 2.

III. The third general is to *prove that God is wise.*

This is ascribed to God in scripture; *wisdom and might are his, Dan.* 2. 20; wisdom to contrive, and power to effect. * Where should wisdom dwell, but in the head of a deity: and where should power triumph, but in the arm of omnipotence? All that God doth, he doth artificially, skilfully: whence he is called the *builder of the heavens, Heb.* 11. 10. Τεχνίτης, an artificial and curious builder, a builder by art. And that word, meant of Christ, *then I was by him as one brought up with him, Prov.* 8. 30; some render it, then was I the curious artificer; and the same word is translated *a cunning workman, Cant.* 7. 5. For this cause counsel is ascribed to God; † not properly; for counsel implies something of ignorance, or irresolution, antecedent to the consulta-

* Culverwell, Light of Nature, p. 30.

† Isa. 46. 10. Jer. 32. 19, Great in counsel. Job 12. 13, He hath counsel and understanding.

tion, and a posture of will afterwards, which was not before. Counsel is properly a laborious deliberation and a reasoning of things: an invention of means for the attainment of the end, after a discussing and reasoning of all the doubts which arise *pro re nata*, about the matter in counsel: but God hath no need to deliberate in himself, what are the best means to accomplish his ends, he is never ignorant, or undetermined, what course he should take, as men are before they consult. But it is an expression in condescension to our capacity, to signify that God does nothing but with reason and understanding, with the highest prudence, and for the most glorious ends, as men do after consultation, and weighing every foreseen circumstance.

Though he acts all things sovereignly by his will, yet he acts all things wisely by his understanding; and there is not a decree of his will, but he can render a satisfactory reason for, in the face of men and angels. As he is the cause of all things, so he hath the highest wisdom for the ordering of all things. If wisdom among men be the knowledge of divine and human things, God must be infinitely wise, since knowledge is most radiant in him; he knows what angels and men do, and infinitely more; what is known by them obscurely, is known by him clearly: what is known by man after it is done, was known by God before it was wrought. By his wisdom as much as by any thing, he infinitely differs from all his creatures; as by wisdom man differs from a brute. We cannot frame a notion of God without conceiving him infinitely wise. We should render him very inconsiderable to imagine him furnished with an infinite knowledge, and not have an infinite wisdom to make use of that knowledge; or to fancy him with a mighty power, destitute of prudence. Knowledge without prudence is an eye without motion; and power without discretion is an arm without a head; a hand to act without understanding to contrive and model; strength to act without reason to know how to act: it would be a miserable notion of a God to fancy him with a brutish and unguided power. The heathens therefore had, and could not but have, this

natural notion of God. Plato therefore calls him *Mens*,* and Cleanthes used to call God *Reason*, and Socrates thought the title of Σοφὸς too magnificent to be attributed to any thing but God alone.

Arguments to prove that God is wise.

Reason 1. God could not be *infinitely perfect without wisdom.* A rational nature is better than an irrational nature. A man is not a perfect man without reason; how can God, without it, be an infinitely perfect God. Wisdom is the most eminent of all virtues; all the other perfections of God without this, would be as a body without an eye, a soul without understanding. A christian's graces want their lustre, when they are destitute of the guidance of wisdom; mercy is feebleness, and justice cruelty, patience timorousness, and courage madness, without the conduct of wisdom; so the patience of God would be cowardice, his power oppression, his justice tyranny, without wisdom as the spring, and holiness as the rule. No attribute of God could shine with due lustre and brightness without it. Power is a great perfection, but wisdom a greater.† Wisdom may be without much power, as in bees and ants; but power is a tyrannical thing without wisdom and righteousness. The pilot is more valuable because of his skill, than the galley slave because of his strength; and the conduct of a general more estimable than the might of a private soldier. Generals are chosen more by their skill to guide, than their strength to act; what a clod is man without prudence; what a nothing would God be without it? This is the salt that gives relish to all other perfections in a creature: this is the jewel in the ring of all the excellencies of the divine nature, and holiness is the splendour of that jewel.

Now God being the first being, possesses whatsoever is most noble in any being. If therefore wisdom, which is the most noble perfection in any creature, were wanting to God, he would be deficient in that which is the

* Eugub. per. Philosoph. lib. 1. cap. 5.

† Licet magnum sit posse, majus tamen est sapere.

highest excellency. God being *the living God*, as he is frequently termed in scripture, he hath therefore the most perfect manner of living, and that must be a pure and intellectual life: being essentially living, he is essentially in the highest degree of living. As he hath an infinite life above all creatures; so he hath an infinite intellectual life, and therefore an infinite wisdom; whence some have called God not *sapientem*, but *super-sapientem*,* not only wise, but above all wisdom.

Reason 2. Without infinite wisdom *he could not govern the world.* Without wisdom in forming the matter which was made by divine power, the world could have been no other than a chaos; and without wisdom in government, it could have been no other than a heap of confusion; without wisdom the world could not have been created in the posture it is. Creation supposes a determination of the will putting power upon acting; the determination of the will supposeth the counsel of the understanding, determining the will. There is no work, but supposes understanding, as well as will in a rational agent. As without skill things could not be created, so without it things cannot be governed. Reason is a necessary perfection to him that presides over all things, without knowledge there could not be in God a foundation for government, and without wisdom there could not be an exercise of government; and without the most excellent wisdom he could not be the most excellent governor. He could not be an universal governor, without universal wisdom, nor the sole governor without inimitable wisdom; nor an independent governor without original and independent wisdom; nor a perpetual governor without incorruptible wisdom. He would not be the Lord of the world in all points, without skill to order the affairs of it.

Power and wisdom are foundations of all authority and government: wisdom to know how to rule and command; power to make those commands obeyed: no regular order could issue without the first, nor could any

* Suarez. vol. 1. lib. 1. cap. 3. p. 10.

order be enforced without the second. A feeble wisdom, and a brutish power, seldom or ever produce any good effect: magistracy without wisdom would be a frantic power, a rash conduct; like a strong arm when the eye is blind, it strikes it knows not what, and leads it knows not whither. Wisdom without power, would be like a great body without feet, * like the knowledge of a pilot that hath lost his arm, who, though he knows the rule of navigation, and what course to follow in his voyage, yet cannot manage the helm: but when wisdom and power are linked together, there arises from both a fitness for government: there is wisdom to propose an end, and both wisdom and power to employ means that conduct to that end. And therefore when God demonstrates to Job his right of government, and the unreasonableness of Job's quarrelling with his proceedings, he chiefly urges upon him the consideration of those two excellencies of his nature, *power* and *wisdom* which are expressed in his works, chap. 38, 39, 40, 41. A prince without wisdom is but a title without capacity to perform the office; no man without it is fit for government: nor could God without wisdom exercise a just dominion in the world. He hath therefore the highest wisdom, since he is the universal governor. That wisdom which is able to govern a family, may not be able to govern a city; and that wisdom which governs a city, may not be able to govern a kingdom, much less a world. The bounds of God's government being greater than any, his wisdom for government must needs surmount the wisdom of all. † And though the creatures be not in number actually infinite, yet they cannot be well governed, but by one endowed with infinite discretion. Providential government can be no more without infinite wisdom than infinite wisdom can be without providence.

Reas. 3. The creatures working for an end, without their own knowledge, *demonstrate the wisdom of God that guides them.* All things in the world work for some end; the ends are unknown to them, though many of their ends

* Amirant. moral. † Amyrald desert. Theol. p. 111.

are visible to us. As there was some prime cause, which by his power inspired them with their several instincts, so there must be some supreme wisdom, which moves and guides them to their end. As their being manifests his power that endowed them, so the acting according to the rules of their nature, which they themselves understand not, manifests his wisdom in directing them. Every thing that acts for an end, must know that end, or be directed by another to attain that end. The arrow does not know who shoots it, or to what end it is shot, or what mark is aimed at; but the archer that puts it in, and darts it out of the bow, knows. A watch hath a regular motion, but neither the spring nor the wheels that move, know the end of their motion; no man will judge wisdom to be in the watch, but in the artificer that disposed the wheels and spring, by a joint combination to produce such a motion for such an end. Does either the sun that enlivens the earth, or the earth that travails with the plant, know what plant it produceth in such a soil, what temper it should be of, what fruit it should bear, and what should be its colour? What plant knows its own medicinal qualities, its own beautiful flowers, and for what use they are ordained? When it strikes up its head from the earth, does it know what proportion of them there will be? Yet it produces all these things in a state of ignorance. The sun warms the earth, concocts the humours, excites the virtue of it, and cherishes the seeds, which are cast into her lap, yet all unknown to the sun or the earth.

Since therefore that nature, that is the immediate cause of those things, does not understand its own quality, nor operation, nor the end of its action, that which thus directs them must be conceived to have an infinite wisdom. When things, act by a rule they know not, and move for an end they understand not, and yet work harmoniously together for one end, of which all of them are ignorant, it raises our minds to acknowledge the wisdom of that supreme cause, that ranged all these inferior causes in their order, and imprinted upon them the laws of their motion, according to the ideas in his own mind, who orders the rule by which they act, and the end for which they act,

and directs every motion according to their several natures, and therefore is possessed with infinite wisdom in his own nature.

Reas. 4. God is the *fountain of all wisdom* in the creatures, and therefore *is infinitely wise himself*. As he hath a fulness of being in himself, because the streams of being are derived to other things from him: so he hath a fulness of wisdom, because he is the spring of wisdom to angels and men. That Being must be infinitely wise from whence all other wisdom derives its original: for nothing can be in the effect, which is not eminently in the cause; the cause is always more perfect than the effect. If therefore the creatures are wise, the Creator must be much more wise. If the Creator were destitute of wisdom, the creature would be much more perfect than the Creator. If you consider the wisdom of the spider in her web, which is both her house and her net; the artifice of the bee in her comb, which is both her chamber and granary; the provision of the pismire in her repositories for corn; the wisdom of the Creator is illustrated by them: whatsoever excellency you see in any creature, is an image of some excellency in God. The skill of the artificer is visible in the fruits of his art; a workman transcribes his spirit in the work of his hands. But the wisdom of rational creatures, as men, does more illustrate it: all arts among men are the rays of divine wisdom shining upon them, and by a common gift of the Spirit enlightening their minds to curious inventions. *I wisdom find out the knowledge of witty inventions, Prov.* 8. 12. that is, I give a faculty to find them out; without my wisdom, all things would be buried in darkness and ignorance: whatsoever wisdom there is in the world, it is but a shadow of the wisdom of God, a small rivulet derived from him, a spark from uncreated wisdom. *He created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and makes the instruments, Isa.* 54. 16. The skill to use those weapons in war like enterprises is from him, *I have created the waster to destroy;* it is not meant of creating their persons, but communicating to them their art; he speaks it there

to expel fear from the church of all warlike preparations against them: he had given men the skill to form and use weapons, and could as well strip them of it, and defeat their purposes: the art of husbandry is a fruit of divine teaching, *Isa.* 28. 24, 25.

If those lower kinds of knowledge, that are common to all nations, and easily learned by all, are discoveries of divine wisdom, much more the nobler sciences, intellectual and political wisdom. *He gives wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding, Dan.* 2. 21, speaking of the more abstruse parts of knowledge; *The inspiration of the Almighty gives understanding, Job* 32. 8. Hence the wisdom which Solomon expressed in the harlot's case, 1 *Kings* 3. 28, was in the judgment of all Israel, the *wisdom of God*; that is a fruit of divine wisdom, a beam communicated to him from God. Every man's soul is endowed more or less with those noble qualities; the soul of every man exceeds that of a brute; if the streams be so excellent, the fountain must be fuller and clearer. The first spirit must infinitely more possess what other spirits derive from him by creation; were the wisdom of all the angels in heaven, and men on earth, collected in one spirit, it must be infinitely less than what is in the spring; for no creature can be equal to the Creator. As the highest creature already made, or that we can conceive may be made by infinite power, would be infinitely below God in the notion of a creature, so it would be infinitely below God in the notion of wisdom.

PART III.

MANIFESTATIONS OF DIVINE WISDOM.

The wisdom of God in creation—The variety, beauty, order, and situation of the creatures—The heavens—The earth—The sea, display the wisdom of God—His wisdom seen in the fitness of every thing for its end—And its usefulness—The union and subordination of all creation—The wisdom of God appears in his government of his creatures—Of man—The law he gives to man—Suited to his nature—To his happiness—To his conscience—The encouragements given to obedience—The revelation of God's will adapted to all times subsequent to the first promulgation of it---The various inclinations and conditions of men.

WE are now to consider, IV. wherein the wisdom of God appears.

It appears 1. in creation, 2. in government, 3. in redemption.

FIRST, in *creation.* As in a musical instrument, there is first the skill of the workman in the frame; then the skill of the musician in stringing it for such musical notes as he will express upon it; and after that the tempering of the strings by various stops to a delightful harmony; so is the wisdom of God seen in framing the world, then in tuning it, and afterwards in the motion of the several creatures. The fabric of the world is called the wisdom of God; *After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God,* 1 *Cor.* 1. 21, i. e. by the creation of the world knew not God; the

framing cause is there put for the effect and the work framed; because the divine wisdom stepped forth in the creatures to a public appearance, as if it had presented itself in a visible shape to man, giving instructions in and by the creatures, to know and adore him. What we translate, *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*, *Gen.* 1. 1. the Targum expresseth, *In wisdom God created the heaven and the earth.* Both bear a stamp of this perfection on them;* and when the apostle tells the Romans, *The invisible things of God were clearly understood by the things that are made*, *Rom.* 1. 20, the word he uses is, ποιήμασι, not ἔργοις this signifies a work of labour, but ποίημα a work of skill, or a poem. The whole creation is a poem, every species a stanza, and every individual creature a verse in it. The creation presents us with a prospect of the wisdom of God, as a poem does the reader with the wit and fancy of the composer: *By wisdom he created the earth*, *Prov.* 3. 19, *and stretched out the heavens by discretion*, *Jer.* 10. 12. There is not any thing so mean, so small, but glitters with a beam of divine skill; and the consideration of them would justly make every man exclaim, *O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all*, *Psal.* 104. 24. All, the least as well as the greatest, and the meanest as well as the noblest; even those creatures which seem ugly and deformed to us, as toads, &c. because they fall short of those perfections which are the dowry of other animals; in these there is a footstep of divine wisdom, since they were not produced by him at random, but determined to some particular end, and designed to some usefulness, as parts of the world in their several natures and stations. God could never have had satisfaction in the review of his works, and pronounced them *good* or comely, as he did, *Gen.* 1. 31. had they not been agreeable to the eternal original copy in his own mind; it is said he was *refreshed*, viz. with that review, *Exod.* 31. 17, which could not have been, if his piercing eye had found any defect in any thing, or an unsuitableness to that end for which he created

* Omne opus naturæ est opus intelligentiæ.

them. He seems to do as a man that hath made a curious work, with exact care to peer about every part and line, if he could perceive any imperfection in it, to rectify the mistake; but no defect was found by the infinitely wise God upon his second examination.

This wisdom of the creation appears, 1. In the *variety* of the creatures, *O Lord how manifold are thy works! Psal.* 104. 24. How great a variety is there of animals and plants, with a great variety of forms, shapes, figurations, colours, smells, virtues, and qualities, and this variety is produced from one and the same matter, as beasts and plants from the earth; *Let the earth bring forth living creatures; and the earth brought forth grass, and the herb yielding seed after his kind, Gen.* 1. 11, 24. Such diversity of fowl and fish from the water; *Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowls that may fly, Gen.* 1. 20. Such a beautiful and active variety from so dull a matter as the earth; so solid a variety from so fluid a matter as the water; so noble a piece as the body of man, with such variety of members, fit to entertain a more excellent soul as a guest, from so mean a matter as the *dust of the ground, Gen.* 2. 7. This extraction of such variety of forms out of one single and dull matter, is the chymistry of divine wisdom. It is a greater skill to frame noble bodies of vile matter, as varieties of precious vessels of clay and earth, than of a nobler matter, as gold and silver.

Again, all those varieties propagate their kind in every particular and quality of their nature, and uniformly bring forth exact copies according to the first pattern God made of the *kind, Gen.* 1. 11, 12, 24. Consider also how the same piece of ground is garnished with plants and flowers of several virtues, fruits, colours, scents, without our being able to perceive any variety in the earth that breeds them, and not so great a difference in the roots that bear them. Add to this the diversities of birds of different colours, shapes, notes consisting of various parts, wings like oars to cut the air, and tails as the rudder of a ship to guide their motion. How various also are the endowments of the creatures? Some have vege-

tation, and the power of growth; others have the addition of sense, and others the excellency of reason; something wherein all agree, and something wherein all differ; variety in unity, and unity in variety. The wisdom of the workman had not been so conspicuous had there been only one degree of goodness: the greatest skill is seen in the greatest variety.

The comeliness of the body is visible in the variety of members, and their usefulness to one another. What an infirm thing had man been, had he been all ear, or all eye? If God had made all the stars to be suns, it would have been a demonstration of his power, but perhaps less of his wisdom. No creatures, with the natures they now have, could have continued in being under so much heat. There was no less wisdom went to the frame of the least, than to the greatest creature. It speaks more art in a limner to paint a landscape exactly, than to draw the sun, though the sun be a more glorious body. I might instance also in the different characters and features imprinted upon the countenances of men and women, the differences of voices and statures, whereby they are distinguished from one another. These are the foundations of order, and of human society and administration of justice; what confusion would have been if a grown-up son could not be known from his father, the magistrate from the subject, the creditor from the debtor, the innocent from the criminal? The laws God hath given to mankind could not have been put in execution. This variety speaks the wisdom of God.

2. The wisdom of the creation appears in the *beauty*, and *order*, and *situation* of the several creatures. *He hath made every thing beautiful in his time. Eccl.* 3. 11. As their being was a fruit of divine power, so their order is a fruit of divine wisdom. All creatures are as members in the great body of the world, proportioned to one another, and contributing to the beauty of the whole;* so that if the particular forms of every thing, the union of all for the composition of the world, and the laws which are es-

* Amyrant. Moral. vol. 1. p. 257.

tablished in the order of nature for its conservation, be considered, it would rouse the highest admiration of God. All the creatures are so many pictures or statues, exactly framed by line; *Their line is gone through all the earth, Psal.* 19. 4. Their line is a measuring line, or a carpenter's rule, whereby he proportions several pieces to be exactly linked together. *Their line*, that is their harmonious proportion, and the instruction from it, is gone forth through all the earth. Upon the account of this harmony, some of the ancient heathens framed the images of their gods with musical instruments in their hands, signifying that God wrought all things in a due proportion.*

The *heavens* speak his wisdom in their order. The revolutions of the sun and moon determine the seasons of the year, and make day and night in an orderly succession. The stars beautify the heavens and influence the earth, and keep their *courses, Judges* 5. 20. They keep their stations without interfering with one another; and though they have rolled about for so many ages, they observe their distinct laws, and in the variety of their motions have not disturbed one another's functions.† The sun is set as the heart in the midst of this great body, to afford warmth to all. Had it been set lower, it had long since turned the earth into flame and ashes; had it been placed higher, the earth would have wanted the nourishment and refreshment necessary for it. Too much nearness had ruined the earth by parching heat, and too great a distance had destroyed the earth by starving it with cold.

The sun hath also its appointed motion; had it been fixed without motion, half of the earth had been unprofitable; there had been a perpetual darkness in a moiety of it; nothing had been produced for nourishment, and so it had been rendered uninhabitable: but now by this motion, it visits all the climates of the world, *runs its circuit*, so that *nothing is hid from the heat thereof, Psal.*

* Montag, againt Selden, p. 281. Plutarch calls God ἁρμονικὸς κὶα μυσικὸς, he saith, nothing was made without music.

† Charlton, Light of Nature, p. 57.

19. 6. It imparts its virtue to every corner of the world in its daily and yearly visits. Had it been fixed, the fruits of the earth under it had been parched and destroyed before their maturity; but all those inconveniences are provided against by the perpetual motion of the sun. This motion is orderly;* it makes its daily course from east to west, its yearly motion from north to south. It goes to the north till it comes to the point God hath set it, and then turns back to the south, and gains some point every day. It never rises nor sets in the same place one day where it did the day before. The world is never without its light; some see it rising the same moment we see it setting.

The *earth* also speaks the divine wisdom; it is the pavement of the world, as the heaven is the ceiling.† It is placed lowermost, as being the heaviest body, and fit to receive the weightiest matter, and provided as an habitation proper for those creatures, which derive the matter of their their bodies from it, and partake of its earthy nature, and garnished with other creatures for the profit and pleasure of man.

The *sea* also speaks the same divine wisdom. He *strengthened the fountains of the deep, and gave the sea a decree, that it should not pass his command*, *Prov.* 8. 28, 29. He hath given it certain bounds, that it should not overflow the earth, *Job* 28. 11. It contains itself in the situation wherein God hath placed it, and doth not transgress its bounds. What if some part of a country, a little spot, hath been overflowed by it, and groaned under its waves? Yet for the main, it retains the same channels wherein it was at first lodged. All creatures are clothed with an outward beauty, and endowed with an inward harmony; there is an agreement in all parts of this great body; every one is beautiful and orderly; but the beauty of the world results from all of them disposed and linked together.

3. This wisdom is seen in the *fitness of every thing for its end*, and the *usefulness* of it. Divine wisdom is more

* Daille. mel. part 1. p. 483. † Amyrant. Predestin, p. 9.

illustrious in the fitness and usefulness of this great variety, than in the composure of their distinct parts: as the artificer's skill is more eminent in fitting the wheels, and setting them in order for their due motion, than in the external fabric of the metals which compose the clock. After the most diligent inspection, there can be found nothing in the creation unprofitable; nothing but is capable of some service, either for the support of our bodies, recreation of our senses, or moral instruction of our minds. Not the least creature but is formed and shaped and furnished with members and parts in a due proportion for its end and service in the world; nothing is superfluous, nothing defective.

The *earth* is fitted in its parts; * the valleys are appointed for granaries, the mountains to shadow them from the scorching heat of the sun; the rivers like veins, carry refreshment to every member of this body; plants and trees thrive on the face of the earth, and metals are engendered in the bowels of it, for materials for building and other uses for the service of man. *There he causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth, Psal.* 104. 14.

The *sea* is fitted for use; it is a fish-pond for the nourishment of man; a boundary for the dividing of lands and several dominions; it joins together nations far distant: a great vessel for commerce, *there go the ships, Psal.* 104. 26. It affords vapours to the clouds, wherewith to water the earth, which the sun draws up, separating the finer from the salter parts, that the earth may be fruitful, without being burthened with barrenness by the salt. The sea hath also its salt, its ebbs and flows; the one as brine, the other as motion, to preserve it from putrefaction, that it may not be contagious to the rest of the world. *Showers* are appointed to refresh the bodies of living creatures, to open the womb of the earth, and *water the ground to make it fruitful, Psal.* 104. 3. The clouds therefore are called the chariots of God; he rides in them in the

* Amyrant. sur diverses Text. p. 127.

manifestation of his goodness and wisdom. * *Winds* are fitted to purify the air, to preserve it from putrefaction; to carry the clouds to several parts, to refresh the parched earth, and assist her fruits: and also to serve for the commerce of one nation with another by navigation. God in his wisdom and goodness *walks upon the wings of the wind, Psal.* 104. 3.

† *Rivers* are appointed to bathe the ground, and render it fresh and lively; they fortify cities, are the limits of countries, serve for commerce, they are the watering-pots of the earth, and the vessels for drink for the living creatures that dwell upon the earth. God cut those channels for the *wild asses*, the *beasts of the earth*, which are his creatures as well as the rest, *Psal.* 104. 10, 12, 13. *Trees* are appointed for the habitation of birds, shadows for the earth, nourishments for the creatures, materials for building, and fuel for the relief of man against cold. The *seasons* of the year have their use; the winter makes the juice retire into the earth, fortifies plants, and fixes their roots: it moistens the earth that was dried before by the heat of the summer, and cleanses and prepares it for a new fruitfulness. The spring calls out the sap in new leaves and fruit: the summer consumes the superfluous moisture, and produceth nourishment for the inhabitants of the world.

‡ The *day* and *night* have also their usefulness: the day gives life to labour, and is a guide to motion and action. *The sun ariseth, man goeth forth to his labour until the evening. Psal.* 104. 3. It warms the air, and quickens nature; without day the world would be a chaos, an unseen beauty. The night indeed casts a veil upon the beauty of the earth, but it draws the curtains from that of heaven; though it darkens below, it makes us see the beauty of the word above, and discovers to us a glorious part of the creation of God, the tapestry of heaven, and the motion of the stars, hid from us by the eminent light of the day. It procures a truce from labour, and re-

* Lessius. † Daille melan. part 2. p. 472, 473.
‡ Daille melang. part 1. p. 477, &c.

freshes the bodies of creatures, by recruiting the spirits which are scattered by watching. It prevents the ruin of life, by a reparation of what was wasted in the day. It takes from us the sight of flowers and plants, but it washeth them with dews for a new appearance in the morning. The length of the day and night is not without a mark of wisdom; were they of a greater length, as the length of a week or month, the one would too much dry, and the other too much moisten; and for want of action, the members would be stupified. The perpetual succession of day and night, is an evidence of the divine wisdom, in tempering the travel and rest of creatures. Hence the Psalmist tells us, *The day is thine, the night also is thine; thou hast prepared the light of the sun, and made summer and winter*, *Psal.* 74. 16, 17; i. e. they are of God's framing, not without a wise counsel and end.

Hence let us ascend to the *bodies* of living creatures, and we shall find every member fitted for use. What a curiosity is there in every member? Every one fitted to a particular use in their situation, form, temper, and mutual agreement for the good of the whole: the eye to direct, the ear to receive directions from others, the hands to act, the feet to move. Every creature hath members fitted for that element wherein it resides: and in the body, some parts are appointed to change the food into blood, others to refine it, and others to distribute and convey it to several parts for the maintenance of the whole: the heart to mint vital spirits for preserving life, and the brain to coin animal spirits for life and motion; the lungs to serve for the cooling the heart, which else would be parched as the ground in summer. The motion of the members of the body by one act of the will, and also without the will by a natural instinct, is an admirable evidence of divine skill in the structure of the body; so that well might the Psalmist cry out, *I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Psal.* 139. 14.

But how much more of this divine perfection is seen in the *soul?* A nature furnished with a faculty of understanding to judge of things, to gather in things that are

distant, and to reason and draw conclusions from one thing to another, with a memory to treasure things that are past, with a will to apply itself so readily to what the mind judges fit and comely, and fly so speedily from what it judges ill and hurtful. The whole world is a stage, every creature in it hath a part to act, and a nature suited to that part and end for which it is designed; and all concur in united language to publish the glory of divine wisdom, *Psal.* 19. 1, 3. And it is not the least part of God's skill, in framing the creatures so, that upon man's obedience, they are the channels of his goodness; and upon man's disobedience, they can in their natures be the ministers of his justice, for the punishing of offending creatures.

4. The wisdom is apparent in the *linking all these useful parts together*, so that one is *subordinate to the other* for a *common end.* All parts are exactly suited to one another, and every part to the whole, though they are of different natures, as lines distant in themselves, yet they meet in one common centre, the good and the preservation of the universe; they are all joined together, as the word translated *framed* signifies; knit by fit bands and ligaments to contribute mutual beauty, strength, and assistance to one another; like so many links of a chain coupled together, that though there be a distance in place, there is a unity in regard of connexion and end, there is a consent in the whole. *The heavens hear the earth, and the earth hears the corn, and the wine, and the oil, Hosea* 2. 21, 22. The heavens communicate their qualities to the earth, and the earth conveys them to the fruits she bears: * The air distributes light, wind, and rain to the earth; the earth and the sea render to the air exhalations and vapours, and all together charitably give to the plants and animals that which is necessary for their nourishment and refreshment. The influences of the heavens animate the earth, and the earth affords matter in part for the influences it receives from the regions above. Living creatures are maintained by nourishment; nourishment is conveyed to them by the fruits

* Daille. 15. Serm. p. 170.

of the earth; the fruits of the earth are produced by means of rain and heat; matter for rain and dew is raised by the heat of the sun; and the sun by its motion distributes heat and quickening virtue to all parts of the earth.

So colours are made for the pleasure of the eye, sounds for the delight of the ear; light is formed, whereby the eye may see the one, and air to convey the species of colours to the eye and sound to the ear; all things are like the wheels of a watch compacted: and though many of the creatures be endowed with contrary qualities, yet they are joined for the public security, and subserviency to the preservation and order of the universe: as the variety of strings upon an instrument, sending forth various and distinct sounds, are tempered together, for the framing excellent and delightful airs. In this universal conspiring of the creatures together to one end, is the wisdom of the Creator apparent; in tuning so many contraries as the elements are, and preserving them in their order, which if once broken, the whole frame of nature would fall in pieces; all are so interwoven and inlaid together, by the divine workmanship, as to make up one entire beauty in the whole fabric: as every part in the body of man hath a distinct comeliness, yet there is besides, the beauty of the whole, that results from the union of divers parts exactly fashioned to one another, and linked together.—But let us observe by the way,

How much may we see of *the perfection of God in every thing* that presents itself to our eye? And how should we be convinced of our unworthy neglect of ascending to him with reverent and admiring thoughts, upon the prospect of the creatures? What dull scholars are we, when every creature is our teacher, every part of the creature affords lively instruction! Those things that we tread under our feet, if used by us according to the full design of their Creation, would afford rich matter, not only for our heads, but our hearts. As grace does not destroy nature, but elevate it, so neither should the fresher and fuller discoveries of divine wisdom in redemption, deface our thoughts of his wisdom in creation. Though the greater light of the sun obscures the lesser sparkling of the stars, yet it

gives way in the night to the discovery of them, that God may be seen, known, and considered in all his works of wonder, and miracles of nature. No part of scripture is more spiritual than the Psalms; none filled with clearer discoveries of Christ in the old testament; yet how often do the penmen consider the creation of God! *My meditation of him shall be sweet*, *Psal.* 104. 34. When? Why, after a short history of the goodness and wisdom of God in the frame of the world, and the species of the creatures.

Secondly, the wisdom of God appears in his *government of his creatures.* The regular motion of the creatures speaks this perfection, as well as the exact composition of them. If the exquisiteness of the frame conducts us to the skill of the contriver; the exactness of their order, according to his will and law, speaks no less the wisdom of the governor. It cannot be thought that a rash and irrational power presides over a world so well disposed: the disposition of things hath no less characters of skill, than the creation of them. No man can hear an excellent lesson upon a lute, but must presently reflect upon the art of the person that touches it. The prudence of man appears in wrapping up the concerns of a kingdom in his mind, for the well-ordering of it; and shall not the wisdom of God shine forth, as he is the director of the world?

I shall omit his government of inanimate creatures, and confine the discourse to his government of man, as rational, as sinful, as restored.

First, in his government of man as a *rational creature.*

1. In the *law* he gives to man. Wisdom framed it, though will enacted it. The will of God is the rule of righteousness to us, but the wisdom of God is the foundation of that rule of righteousness which he prescribes us. * The composition of a musician is the rule of singing to his scholars; yet the consent and harmony in that composure, derives not itself from his will, but from his understanding; he would not be a musician, if his compo-

* Castellio Dialog. l. 4, p. 46.

sitions were contrary to the rules of true harmony: so the laws of men are composed by wisdom though they are enforced by will and authority.

The moral law, which was the law of nature, the law imprinted upon Adam, is so framed, as to secure the rights of God as supreme, and the rights of men in their distinctions of superiority and equality: it is therefore called *holy and good*, *Rom.* 7. 12, *Holy*, as it prescribes our duty to God in his worship; *good*, as it regulates the offices of human life, and preserves the common interest of mankind.

1. It is suited to the *nature of man.* As God hath given a law of nature, a fixed order to inanimate creatures, so he hath given a law of reason to rational creatures: other creatures are not capable of a law distinguishing good and evil, because they are destitute of faculties and capacities to make distinctions between them. It had not been agreeable to the wisdom of God to propose any moral law to them, who had neither understanding to discern, nor will to chuse. It is therefore to be observed, that whilst Christ exhorted others to embrace his doctrine, yet he exhorted not little children, though he took them in his arms, because though they had faculties, yet they were not come to such maturity, as to be capable of rational instruction. But there was a necessity for some command for the government of man; since God had made him a rational creature, it was not agreeable to his wisdom to govern him as a brute, but as a rational creature, capable of knowing his precepts, and voluntarily walking in them; and without a law, he had not been capable of any exercise of his reason in services respecting God.

He therefore gives him a law with a covenant annexed to it, whereby man is obliged to obedience, and secured of a reward. This was enforced with severe penalties, death, with all the horrors attending it, to deter him from transgression, *Gen.* 2. 17, wherein is implied a promise of continuance of life, and all its felicities, to allure him to a mindfulness of his obligation. So perfect a hedge did divine wisdom set about him, to keep him

within the bounds of that obedience, which was both his debt and security, that wheresoever he looked, he saw either something to invite him, or something to drive him to his duty, and to perseverance in it. Thus the law was exactly framed to the nature of man; man had interwoven with his nature a desire of happiness; and the promise was suited to cherish this desire. He had also the passion of fear; the proper object of this was any thing destructive to his being, nature, and felicity; this the threatening met with. In the whole it was accommodated to man as rational; precepts to the law in his mind, promises to the natural appetite, threatenings to the most prevailing affection, and to the implanted desires of preserving both his being and happiness in that being. These were rational motives fitted to the nature of Adam, which was above the life God had given plants, and the sense he had given animals.

The command given man in innocence, was suited to his strength and power; God gave him not any command, but what he had ability to observe; and since we want not power to forbear an apple in our corrupted and impotent state, he wanted not strength in his state of integrity. The wisdom of God commanded nothing, but what was very easy to be observed by him, and inferior to his natural ability. It had been both unjust and unwise to have commanded him to fly up to the sun, when he had not wings; and stop the course of the sea, when he had not strength.

2. It is suited to the *happiness* and benefit of man. God's laws are not an act of mere authority respecting his own glory, but of wisdom and goodness respecting man's benefit. They are perfective of man's nature, conferring wisdom upon him, *rejoicing his heart, enlightening his eyes, Psal.* 19. 7, 8, affording him both knowledge of God, and of himself. To be without a law, is for man to be as beasts, without justice and without religion. Other things are for the good of the body, but the laws of God for the good of the soul: the more perfect the law, the greater the benefit. The laws given to the Jews were the honour and excellency of that

nation; *What nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous, Deut.* 1. 8. They were made statesmen in the *judicial* law, ecclesiastics in the *ceremonial*; honest men in the *second table*, and divine in the *first*. All his laws are suited to the true satisfaction of man, and the good of society. Had God framed a law only for one nation, there would have been the characters of a particular wisdom; but now an universal wisdom appears, in accommodating his law, not only to this or that particular society or corporation of men, but to the benefit of all mankind in the variety of climates and countries wherein they live. Every thing that is disturbing to society is provided against; nothing is enjoined, but what is sweet, rational, and useful; it orders us not to attempt any thing against the life of our neighbour, the honour of his bed, propriety in his goods, and the clearness of his reputation; and if well observed, would alter the face of the world, and make it look with another hue.

The world would be altered from a brutish to a human world; it would change lions and wolves, men of lion-like and wolvish disposition, into reason and sweetness. And because the whole law is summed up in *love*, it obliges us to endeavour the preservation of one another's beings, the favouring of one another's interests, and increasing the goods, as much as justice will permit, and keeping up one another's credits; because love, which is the soul of the law, is not shewn by a cessation from action, but signifies an order upon all occasions in doing good. I say, were this law well observed, the world would be another thing than it is. It would become a religious fraternity, the voice of enmity and the noise of groans and cursings would not be heard in our streets; peace would be in all our borders; plenty of charity in the midst of cities and countries; joy and singing would sound in all habitations. Man's advantage was designed in God's laws, and naturally results from the observation of them. God so ordered them by his wisdom, that the obedience of man should draw forth his goodness, and prevent those smarting judgments, which were necessary

to reduce the creature to order, that would not voluntarily continue in the order God had appointed.

The laws of men are often unjust, oppressive, cruel; sometimes against the law of nature; but an universal wisdom and righteousness glitters in the divine law; there is nothing in it but what is worthy of God, and useful for the creature; so that we may well say with Job, *Who teaches like God, Job 36. 22*, or as some render it, *who is a law-giver like God? Who can say to him, thou hast wrought iniquity* or folly among men? His precepts were framed for the preservation of man in that rectitude wherein he was created, in the likeness to God wherein he was first made, that there might be a correspondence between the integrity of the creature and the goodness of his Creator, by the obedience of man; that man might exercise his faculties in operations worthy of him, and beneficial to the world.

3. The wisdom of God is seen in suiting his laws to the *consciences*, as well as the interest of all mankind. *The Gentiles do by nature the things contained in the law, Rom. 2. 14*, so great an affinity there is between the wise law and the reason of man. There is a natural beauty emerging from them, and darting upon the reasons and consciences of men, which dictates to them that this law is worthy to be observed in itself. The two main principles of the law, the love and worship of God, and doing as we would be done by, have an indelible impression in the consciences of all men in regard of the principles; though they are not suitably expressed in the practice. Were there no law outwardly published, yet every man's conscience would dictate to him, that God was to be acknowledged, worshipped, and loved, as naturally as his reason would acquaint him that there was such a being as God. This suitableness to the consciences of men is manifest, in that the laws of the best governed nations among the heathen have had an agreement with them. Nothing can be more exactly composed, according to the rules of right and exact reason than this; no man but approves of something in it, yea of the whole when he exerciseth that dim reason

which he hath. Suppose any man, (not an absolute atheist) he cannot but acknowledge the reasonableness of worshipping God. Grant him to be a Spirit, and it will presently appear absurd to represent him by any corporeal image, and derogate from his excellency by so mean a resemblance; with the same easiness he will grant a reverence due to the name of God; that we must not serve our turn of him, by calling him to witness to a lie in a solemn oath. That as worship is due to him, so some stated time is a circumstance necessary to the performance of that worship.

And as to the second table, will any man in his right reason quarrel with that command that engageth his inferiors to honour him; that secures his being from murder, and his goods from unjust rapine? and though by the fury of his lusts he breaks the laws of wedlock himself, yet he cannot but approve of that law, as it prohibits every man from doing him the like injury and disgrace. The suitableness of the law to the consciences of men, is further evidenced by those furious reflections and strong alarms of conscience upon any transgression of it, and that in all parts of the world, more or less in all men; so exactly hath divine wisdom fitted the law to the reason and consciences of men, as one tally to another. Indeed, without such an agreement, no man's conscience could have any ground for alarm, nor need any man be startled with the records of it. This manifests the wisdom of God in framing his law so, that the reasons and consciences of all men do one time or other subscribe to it. What governor in the world is able to make any law distinct from this revealed by God, that shall reach all places, all persons, all hearts? We may add to this the extent of his commands in ordering goodness at the root, not only in action but affection; not only in the motion of the members, but the disposition of the soul; which suiting a law to the inward frame of man, is quite out of the compass of the wisdom of any creature.

4. His wisdom is seen in the *encouragements* he gives for the studying and observing his will, *Psal.* 19. 11. *In*

keeping the commandments there is great reward. Consider the variety of them; there is not any particular genius in man, but may find something suitable to win upon him in the revealed will of God. There is a strain of reason to satisfy the rational; of eloquence to gratify the fanciful; of interest to allure the selfish; of terror to startle the obstinate. As a skilful angler stores himself with baits, according to the appetites of the sorts of fish he intends to catch; so in the word of God there are varieties of baits, according to the varieties of the inclinations of men; threatenings to work upon fear; promises to work upon love; examples of holy men set out for imitation; and those plainly, neither his threatenings nor his promises are dark as the heathen oracles; but peremptory as becomes a sovereign lawgiver; and plain as was necessary for the understanding of a creature. As he deals graciously with men in exhorting and encouraging them; so he deals wisely, by taking away all excuse from them if they ruin the interest of their souls by denying obedience to their sovereign.

Again, the rewards God proposes are accommodated, not to the brutish parts of man, his carnal sense and appetite; but the capacity of a spiritual soul, which admits only of spiritual gratifications; and cannot in its own nature, without sordid subjection to the humours of the body, be moved by sensual proposals. God supports his precepts with that which the nature of man longed for, and with spiritual delights which can only satisfy a rational appetite: and thereby did as well gratify the noblest desires in man, as oblige him to the noblest service.* Indeed virtue and holiness being perfectly amiable, ought chiefly to affect our understandings, and by them draw our wills to the esteem and pursuit of them. But since the desire of happiness is inseparable from the nature of man, as impossible to be disjoined, as an inclination to descend to be severed from heavy bodies, or an instinct to ascend, from light and airy substances; God serves himself of

* Amyrant.

the inclination of our natures to happiness to engender in us an affection to the holiness he requires. He proposes the enjoyment of a supernatural good and everlasting glory, as a bait to that insatiable longing our natures have for happiness, to receive the impression of holiness into our souls. And besides, he proportions rewards according to the degrees of men's industry, labour, and zeal for him; and weighs out a recompence, not only suited to, but above the service. He that improves *five talents* is to be ruler over *five cities;* that is a greater proportion of honour and glory than another, *Luke* 19. 17, 18: as a wise father excites the affection of his children to things worthy of praise, by a variety of recompences according to their several actions. And it was the wisdom of the *steward*, in the judgment of our Saviour, to give every one the *portion that belonged to him*, *Luke* 12. 42. There is no part of the word wherein we meet not with the will and wisdom of God in variety of duties, and encouragement mingled together.

5. The wisdom of God is seen in fitting the revelations of his will *to aftertimes*, and for the preventing of the *foreseen corruptions of men.* The whole revelation of the mind of God is stored with wisdom in the words, connexion, and sense; it looks backward to past, and forward to future ages. Hidden wisdom lies in the heart of it, like gold in a mine. The Old Testament was so composed, as to fortify the New, when God should bring it to light. The foundations of the gospel were laid in the law: the predictions of the prophets, and figures of law were so wisely framed, and laid down in such clear expressions, as to be proofs of the authority of the New Testament, and convictions of Jesus being the Messiah, *Luke* 24. 14. Things concerning Christ were written in Moses, the prophets, and psalms, and to this day so stare the Jews in the face that they are fain to invent absurd and nonsensical interpretations to excuse their unbelief, and continue themselves in their obstinate blindness. And in pursuance of the efficacy of those predictions, it was a part of the wisdom of God to bring forth the transla-

tion of the Old Testament, (by the means of Ptolemy king of Egypt some hundred years before the coming of Christ) into the Greek language, the tongue then most known in the world. And why? to prepare the Gentiles by the reading of it, for that gracious call he intended them, and for the entertainment of the gospel, which some few years after was to be published among them; that by reading the predictions so long before made they might more readily receive the accomplishment of them in their due time.

The scripture is written in such a manner as to obviate errors foreseen by God to enter into the church. It may be wondered, why the universal particle should be inserted by Christ, in giving the *cup* in the supper, which was not in the distributing the *bread*, Mat. 26. 27, *Drink ye all of it;* Not at the distributing the bread, *eat you all of it:* And Mark in his relation, tells us, *they all drank of it*, Mark 11. 23. The church of Rome has been the occasion of discovering to us the wisdom of our Saviour in inserting that particle *all*, since they were so bold to exclude the communicants from the cup by a trick of concomitancy. Christ foresaw the error, and therefore put in a little word to obviate a great invasion: And the spirit of God has particularly left upon record that particle, as we may reasonably suppose to such a purpose. And so in the description of the blessed Virgin, *Luke* 1. 27, there is nothing of her holiness mentioned, which is with much diligence recorded of *Elizabeth*, ver. 6. probably to prevent the superstition which God foresaw would arise in the world. And we do not find more undervaluing speeches uttered by Christ to any of his disciples in the exercise of his office, than to her, except to Peter. As when she acquainted him with the want of wine at the marriage in Cana, she receives a slighting answer: *Woman, what have I to do with thee?* John 2. 4. And when one was admiring the *blessedness* of her that bare him, he turns the discourse another way, to pronounce blessedness rather as belonging to them that *hear the word of God and keep it, Luke*

11. 27, 28, in a mighty wisdom to antidote his people against any conceit of the prevalency of the virgin over him in heaven, in the exercise of his mediatory office.

(2.) As his wisdom appears in his government by his laws, so it appears in the *various inclinations and conditions of men.* As there is a distinction of several creatures, and several qualities in them for the common good of the world; so among men there are several inclinations and several abilities, as donatives from God, for the common advantage of society; as several channels cut out from the same river run several ways, and refresh several soils; one man is qualified for one employment, another for a different work, yet all of them fruitful to bring in a revenue of glory to God, and a harvest of profit to the rest of mankind. How useless would the body be if it had but *one member?* 1 *Cor.* 12. 19. How unprovided would a house be if it had not vessels of dishonour as well as of honour? The corporation of mankind would be as much a chaos, as the matter of the heavens and the earth was before it was distinguished by several forms breathed into it at the creation. Some are inspired with a particular genius for one art, some for another: Every man hath a distinct talent. If all were husbandmen, where would be the instruments to plough and reap? If all were artificers; where would they have corn to nourish themselves? all men are like vessels, and parts in the body designed for distinct offices and functions for the good of the whole, and mutually return advantage to one another.

As the variety of *gifts* in the church is a fruit of the wisdom of God, for the preservation and increase of the church, so the variety of inclinations and employments in the world is a fruit of the wisdom of God, for the preservation and subsistance of the world by mutual commerce; what the apostle largely discourses of the former, in 1 *Cor.* 12, may be applied to the other. The various *conditions* of men is also a fruit of divine wisdom. Some are rich, and some poor; the rich have as much need of the poor, as the poor have of the rich: if the poor depend upon the rich for their livelihood, the rich depend upon the poor for their conveniencies. Many arts would

not be learned by men, if poverty did not oblige them to it; and many would faint in the learning of them, if they were not thereunto encouraged by the rich.

The poor labour for the rich, as the earth sends vapours into the vaster and fuller air: and the rich return advantages again to the poor, as the clouds do the vapours in rain upon the earth. As meat would not afford a nourishing juice without bread, and bread without other food would immoderately fill the stomach, and not be well digested; so the rich would be unprofitable in the common-wealth without the poor, and the poor would be burthensome without the rich: the poor could not be easily governed without the rich, nor the rich sufficiently and conveniently provided for without the poor. If all were rich, there would be no objects for the exercise of a noble part of charity: if all were poor, there were no matter for the exercise of it. Thus the divine wisdom planted various inclinations, and diversified the condition of men for the public advantages of the world.

PART IV.

THE WISDOM OF GOD GOVERNING MAN AS A SINNER.

God's wisdom visible in the aboundings of sin---Bringing glory to himself out of it---Out of sin itself---Making use of sinful instruments---Producing good out of sin to the creature---In the work of redemption---The good of nations often promoted by sin---The good of the sinner himself---The wisdom of God orders the sin and corruptions of the heart for good---Makes his people more powerfully feel the necessity of dependence on himself---The value and virtue of the blood of Christ more highly esteemed---Greater zeal for his glory---Increase of humility---The prevalence of one sin made the means of discovering more---The conscience more tender, the soul more watchful---Mortification of sin---Sanctification promoted---Sin over-ruled by the wisdom of God for the christian's growth in grace.

Secondly. GOD's wisdom appears *in the government of men*, as *fallen* and *sinful;* or in the government of *sin*. After the law of God was broke, and sin invaded and conquered the world; divine wisdom had another scene to act in, and other methods of government were necessary. The wisdom of God is then seen in ordering those jarring discords, drawing good out of evil, and honour to himself out of that, which in its own nature tended to the supplanting of his glory. God being a sovereign good, would not suffer so great an evil to enter, but to serve himself of it for some greater end; for all his thoughts are full of goodness and wisdom.

Now though the permission of sin be an act of his sovereignty, and the punishment of sin be an act of his justice; yet the ordination of sin to good, is an act of his wisdom, whereby he disposes the evil, over-rules the malice, and orders the events of it to his purposes. Sin in itself is a disorder, and therefore God doth not permit sin for itself; for in its own nature it hath nothing of amiableness; but he wills it for some righteous end, which belongs to the manifestation of his glory, which is his aim in all the acts of his will: he wills it not as sin, but as his wisdom can order it to some greater good than was before in the world, and make it contribute to the beauty of the order he intends. As a dark shadow is not delightful and pleasant in itself, nor is drawn by a painter for any amiableness there is in the shadow itself, but as it serves to set forth that beauty which is the main design of his art; so the glorious effects which arise from the entrance of sin into the world, are not from the creature's evil, but the depths of divine wisdom.

God's wisdom is seen in *the abounding of sin.* As it is said of the *wrath of man*, it *shall praise him*, and *the remainder of wrath* God will *restrain*, *Psal.* 76. 10. He sets limits to the boiling corruption of the heart, as he does to the boisterous waves of the sea, *hitherto shalt thou go, and no further.* As God is the rector of the world, he so restrains sin, so tempers and directs it, as that human society is preserved, which else would be overflown with a deluge of wickedness, and ruin would be brought upon all communities. If God by his wisdom and goodness did not set bars to that wickedness which is in the hearts of men, the whole earth would be as bad as hell. Since the heart of man is a hell of corruption, by that the souls of all men would be excited to the acting the worst villanies; since *every thought of the heart of man is only evil, and that continually, Gen.* 6. 5, if the wisdom of God did not stop these flood-gates of evil, it would overflow the world, and frustrate all the gracious designs he carries on among the sons of men. Were it not for this wisdom, every house would be filled

with violence, as well as every nature is with sin. What harm would not strong and furious beasts do, did not the skill of man tame and bridle them? How often hath divine wisdom restrained the viciousness of human nature, and let it run, not to that point they designed, but to the end he proposed? Laban's fury, and Esau's enmity again Jacob, were pent in within bounds for Jacob's safety, and their hearts over-ruled from an intended destruction to perfect amity. *Gen.* 31. 29. and 32.

God's wisdom is seen in *bringing glory to himself out of sin.* 1. Out of *sin itself.* God erects the trophies to his honour upon that, which is a natural means to hinder and defer it. His glorious attributes are drawn out to our view upon the occasion of sin, which otherwise had lain hid in his own being. Sin is altogether abominable, but by the admirable wisdom of God, he hath drawn out of the dreadful darkness of sin the saving beams of his mercy, and displayed his grace in the incarnation and passion of his Son for the atonement of sin. Thus he permitted Adam's fall, and wisely ordered it for a fuller discovery of his own nature, and a higher elevation of man's good, that *as sin reigned to death, so might grace reign through righteousness to eternal life, by Jesus Christ, Rom.* 5. 21. The unbounded goodness of God could not have appeared without it. His goodness in rewarding innocent obedience would have been manifested; but not his mercy in pardoning rebellious crimes. An innocent creature is the object of the rewards of grace, as the standing angels are under the beams of grace; but not under the beams of mercy, because they were never sinful, and consequently never miserable. Without sin the creature had not been miserable. Had man remained innocent, he had not been the subject of punishment; and without the creature's misery, God's mercy in sending his Son to save his enemies, could not have appeared. The abundance of sin is a passive occasion for God to manifest the abundance of his grace.

The power of God in changing the heart of a rebellious creature had not appeared, had not sin infected our

nature. We had not clearly known the vindictive justice of God, had no crime been committed; for that is the proper object of divine wrath. The goodness of God could never have permitted justice to exercise itself upon an innocent creature, that was not guilty either personally or by imputation. Wisdom is illustrious hereby. God suffered man to fall into a mortal disease, to shew the virtue of his own restoratives to cure sin, which in itself is incurable by the art of any creature. And otherwise this perfection whereby God draws good out of evil, had been utterly useless, and would have been destitute of an object wherein to discover itself.

Again, wisdom in ordering a rebellious headstrong world to its own ends, is greater than the ordering an innocent world, exactly observant of his precepts, and complying with the end of the creation. Now, without the entrance of sin, this wisdom had wanted a stage to act upon. Thus God raised the honour of his wisdom, while man ruined the integrity of his nature, and made use of the creature's breach of his divine law to establish the honour of it in a more signal and stable manner, by the active and passive obedience of the Son of his bosom. Nothing serves God so much, as an occasion of glorifying himself, as the entrance of sin into the world; by this occasion God communicates to us the knowledge of those perfections of his nature, which had else been folded up from us in an eternal night; his justice had lain in the dark, as having nothing to punish; his mercy had been obscure, as having none to pardon; a great part of his wisdom had been silent, as having no such object to order.

2. His wisdom appears, in making use of *sinful instruments.* He uses the malice and enmity of the devil to bring about his own purposes, and makes the sworn enemy of his honour contribute to the illustrating of it against his will. This great crafts-master he took in his own net, and defeated the devil by the devil's malice; by turning the plans he had accomplished against man, against himself. He used him as a tempter, to grapple with our Saviour in the wilderness, whereby to make him fit to succour us; and as the God of this world, to inspire the

wicked Jews to crucify him, whereby to render him actually the Redeemer of the world, and so made him an ignorant instrument of that divine glory he designed to ruin. * It is more skill to make a curious piece of workmanship with ill-conditioned tools, than with instruments naturally fitted for the work. It is no such great wonder for a limner to draw an exact piece with a fit pencil and suitable colours, as to begin and perfect a beautiful work with a straw and water, things improper for such a design. This wisdom of God is more admirable and astonishing than if a man were able to rear a vast palace by fire, whose nature is to consume combustible matter, not to erect a building.

To make things serviceable contrary to their own nature, is wisdom peculiar to the Creator. God's making use of devils for the glory of his name, and the good of his people, is more amazing wisdom, than his goodness in employing the blessed angels in his work. To promise that the *world*, (which includes the God of the world) and *death*, and *things present*, let them be as evil as they will, should be *ours*, that is, for our good, and for his glory, is an act of goodness; but to make them serviceable to the honour of Christ, and the good of his people, is wisdom that may well raise our highest admirations, 1 *Cor.* 3. 22. They are for believers, as they are for the glory of Christ, and as Christ is for the glory of God.

To chain up Satan wholly, and frustrate his wiles, would be an argument of divine goodness; but to suffer him to run his risk, and then improve all his contrivances for his own glorious and gracious purposes, manifests besides his power and goodness, his wisdom also. He uses the sins of evil instruments for the *glory of his justice, Isa.* 10. 5, 6, 7. Thus he served himself of the ambition and covetousness of the Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Romans, for the correction of his people and punishment of rebels. Just as the Roman magistrates used the fury of lions and other wild beasts in their theatres, for the punishment of criminals. The lions acted under their

* Moulins Serm. Decad. 10. p. 231, 232.

natural temper in tearing those that were exposed to them for a prey; but the intent of the magistrates was to punish their crimes. The magistrate inspired not the lions with their rage, that they had from their natures; but served themselves of that natural rage to execute justice.

3. God's wisdom is seen in bringing good to the creature *out of sin.* He hath ordered sin to such an end as man never dreamed of, the devil never imagined, and sin in its own nature could never attain. Sin in its own nature tends to no good but that of punishment, whereby the creature is brought into order. It hath no relation to the creature's good in itself, but to the creature's mischief. But God, by an act of infinite wisdom, brings good out of it to the creature, as well as glory to his name, contrary to the nature of the crime, the intention of the criminal, and the design of the tempter. God willed sin, that is, he willed to permit it, that he might communicate himself to the creature in the most excellent manner. He willed the permission of sin, as an occasion to bring forth the mystery of the incarnation and passion of our Saviour; as he permitted the sin of Joseph's brethren that he might use their evil to a good end. He never, because of his holiness, wills sin as an end; but in regard of his wisdom he wills to permit it as a means and occasion. And thus, to draw good out of those things which are in their own nature most contrary to good, is the highest pitch of wisdom.

1. The redemption of man in so excellent a way, was drawn from *the occasion of sin.* The greatest blessing that ever the world was blessed with, was ushered in by contrarieties, by the lust and irregular affection of man; the first promise of the Redeemer by the fall of Adam, *Gen.* 3. 15, and the *bruising the heel of that promised seed* by the blackest tragedy acted by wicked rebels, the treachery of Judas, and the rage of the Jews; the highest good hath been brought forth by the greatest wickedness. As God out of the chaos and indigested matter framed the first creation; so from the sins of men, and malice of Satan, he hath erected the everlasting scheme of honour in a new creation of all things by Jesus Christ.

The devil inspired man to content his own fury in the death of Christ; and God ordered it to accomplish his own design of redemption in the passion of the Redeemer: the devil had his diabolical ends, and God overpowers his action to serve his own divine ends. The person that betrayed him was admitted to be a spectator of his most private actions, that his innocence might be justified; to shew that he was not afraid to have his enemies judges of his most retired privacies. While they all thought to do their own wills, divine wisdom orders them to do his will. *Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain, Acts* 2. 23. And wherein the crucifiers of Christ sinned, in shedding the richest blood, upon their repentance they found the expiation of their crimes, and the discovery of a superabundant mercy. Nothing but blood was aimed at by them: the best blood was shed by them; but infinite wisdom makes the cross the scene of his own righteousness, and the means of man's recovery.

By the occasion of man's lapsed state, there was a way open to raise him to a more excellent condition, than that wherein he was by creation: and the depriving man of the happiness of an earthly paradise, in a way of justice, was an occasion of advancing him to a heavenly felicity in a way of grace. The violation of the old covenant, occasionally introduced a better: the loss of the first integrity ushered in a more stable righteousness, an *everlasting righteousness, Dan.* 9. 24. And the falling of the first head, was succeeded by one whose standing could not but be eternal.

The fall of Satan was ordered by infinite wisdom, for the good of that body from which he fell. It is supposed by some, that he was the chief angel in heaven, the head of all the rest; and that he falling, the angels were left as a body without a head; and afterwards he endeavoured to destroy man, and root him out of Paradise, but God takes this opportunity to set up his Son as the head of angels and men. And thus whilst the enemy endeavoured to spoil the corporation of angels, and make them a body contrary to God, God makes angels

and men one body under one head, for his service. The angels in losing a defectible head, attained a more excellent and glorious head in another nature, which they had not before; though of a lower nature in his humanity, yet of a more glorious nature in his divinity: from whence many suppose they derive their confirming grace, and the stability of their standing. *All things in heaven and earth are gathered together in Christ*, *Eph.* 1. 10. ἀνακεφαλαιωσασθαι, all united in him, and reduced under one head: that though our Saviour be not properly their Redeemer, for redemption supposeth captivity, yet in some sense he is their head and mediator; so that now the inhabitants of heaven and earth are but one family, *Eph.* 3. 15. And the *innumerable company of angels* are parts of that heavenly and triumphant Jerusalem and that *general assembly*, whereof Jesus Christ is *mediator*, *Heb.* 12. 22, 29.

2. The *good of a nation* often by the skill of Divine Wisdom, *is promoted by the sins of some men.* The patriarchs' selling Joseph to the Midianites, was without question a sin, and a breach of natural affection; yet by God's wise ordination, it proved the safety of the whole church of God in the world, as well as the Egyptian nation, *Gen.* 45, 5, 8, and 50. 30.

The *Jews'* unbelief was a step whereby the Gentiles arose to the knowledge of the gospel: As the setting of the sun in one place, is the rising of it in another, *Mat.* 22. 9. He uses the corruptions of men instrumentally to propagate his gospel: he built up the true church by the *preaching of some out of envy*, *Phil.* 1. 15. as he blessed Israel out of the mouth of a *false prophet*, *Numb.* 23. How often have the heresies of men been the occasion of clearing up the truth of God, and fixing the more lively impressions of it on the hearts of believers?

Jonah's sin was probably the first and remote occasion of the Ninevites' giving credit to his prophesy: his sin was the cause of his punishment, and his being cast into the sea might facilitate the reception of his message, and excite the Ninevites' repentance, whereby a cloud of severe judgment was dispersed. It is thought by some, that when Jonah passed through the streets of Nineveh with

his proclamation of destruction, he might be known by some of the mariners of that ship, from whence he was cast over board into the sea, and might after their voyage be occasionally in that city, the metropolis of the nation, and the place of some of their births; and might acquaint the people, that this was the same person they had cast into the sea by his own consent, for his acknowledged running from the *presence of the Lord;* as he had told them, chap. 1. 10. and the mariner's prayer, verse 14, evidenceth it; whereupon they might conclude his message worthy of belief, since they knew from such evidences, that he had sunk into the waters, and now saw him safe in their streets, by a deliverance unknown to them; and that therefore that power that delivered him, could easily verify his word in the threatened judgment. Had Jonah gone at first without committing that sin, and receiving that punishment, his message had not been judged a divine prediction, but a fruit of some enthusiastic madness: his sin upon this account was the first occasion of averting a judgment from so great a city.

3. The good of the sinner *himself* is sometimes promoted by *divine Wisdom ordering the sin.* As God had not permitted sin to enter upon the world, unless to bring glory to himself by it; so he would not let sin remain in the little world of a believer's heart, if he did not intend to order it for his good. What is done by man to his damage and disparagement, is directed by Divine Wisdom to his advantage; not that it is the intent of the sin or the sinner; but it is the event of the sin, by the ordination of divine wisdom and grace.

As without the wisdom of God permitting sin to enter into the world, some attributes of God had not been experimentally known; so some graces could not have been exercised: for where had there been an object for that noble zeal, in vindicating the glory of God, had it not been invaded by an enemy. The intenseness of love to him could not have been so strong, had we not an enemy to hate for his sake. Where had there been any place for that noble part of charity in holy admonitions and compassion to the souls of our neighbours, and endeavours to

reduce them out of a destructive to a happy path? Humility would not have had so many grounds for its growth and exercise, and holy sorrow had had no fuel. And as without the appearance of sin, there had been no exercise of the patience of God; so without afflictions, the fruits of sin, there had been no ground for the exercise of the patience of a christian, one of the noblest parts of valour. Now sin being evil, and such as cannot but be evil, hath no respect in itself to any good, and cannot work a gracious end, or any thing profitable to the creature; nay it is a hindrance to any good, and therefore what good comes from it is accidental, occasioned indeed by sin, but efficiently caused by the overruling wisdom of God, taking occasion thereby to display itself and the divine goodness.

The sins and corruptions remaining in the heart of man, God orders for good, and there are good effects by the directions of his wisdom and grace.

I. As the soul *respects God.*

1. God often brings forth a *sense* of the *necessity of dependence on him.* The nurse often lets the child slip, that it may the better know who supports it, and may not be too venturous and confident of its own strength. Peter would trust in habitual grace, and God suffers him to fall, that he might trust more in assisting grace; *Though I should die with thee, yet I will not deny thee.* Matt. 26. 35. God leaves sometimes the brightest souls in an eclipse, to manifest, that their holiness, and the preservation of it, depend upon the darting out his beams upon them.

As the falls of men are the effects of their coldness and remissness in acts of faith and repentance; so the fruit of these falls is often a running to him for refuge, and a deeper sense where their security lies. It makes us lower our swelling sails, and come under the lee and protection of divine grace. When the pleasures of sin answer not the expectations of a revolted creature, he reflects upon his former state, and cleaves more close to God, when before God had little of his company; *I will return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now,* Hos. 2. 7. As God makes the sins of men sometimes

an occasion of their conversion; so he sometimes makes them an occasion of a further conversion. Onesimus run from Philemon, and was met with by Paul, who proved an instrument of his conversion. *My son* Onesimus, *whom I have begotten in my bonds. Phil.* 10. His flight from his master was the occasion of his regeneration by Paul a prisoner.

The falls of believers God orders to their further stability: he that is fallen for want of using his staff, will lean more upon it to preserve himself from the like disaster. God, by permitting the lapses of men, often makes them despair of their own strength to subdue their enemies, and rely upon the strength of Christ, wherein God hath laid up power for us, and so becomes stronger in that strength which he hath ordained for them. We are very apt to trust in ourselves, and have confidence in our own worth and strength; and God lets loose corruptions to abate this swelling humour. This was the reason of the apostle Paul's *thorn in the flesh*, 2 *Cor.* 12. 9, whether it were a temptation, or corruption, or sickness, that he might be sensible of his own inability, and where the sufficiency of grace for him was placed. He that is in danger of drowning, and hath the waves come over his head, will with all the might he hath, lay hold upon any thing near him, which is likely to save him. God lets his people sometimes sink into such a condition, that they may lay the faster hold on him *who is near to all that call upon him.*

2. God hereby raiseth *higher estimations* of the value and virtue of the blood of Christ. As the great reason why God permitted sin to enter into the world, was to honour himself in the Redeemer; so the continuance of sin, and the conquests it sometimes makes in renewed men, are to honour the infinite value and virtue of the Redeemer's merit, which God from the beginning intended to magnify: the value of it, in taking off so much successive guilt; and the virtue of it, in washing away so much daily impurity. The wisdom of God hereby keeps up the credit of imputed righteousness, and manifests the immense treasure of the Redeemer's merit to pay such

daily debts. Were we perfectly sanctified, we should stand upon our own bottom, and imagine no need of the continual and repeated imputation of the righteousness of Christ for our justification: we should confide in inherent righteousness, and slight imputed.

If God should take off all remainders of sin, as well as the guilt of it, we should be apt to forget that we are fallen creatures, and that we had a Redeemer: but the relics of sin in us, mind us of the necessity of some higher strength to set us right: they mind us both of our own misery, and the Redeemer's perpetual benefit. God by this keeps up the dignity and honour of our Saviour's blood to the height, and therefore sometimes lets us see, to our own cost, what sin yet remains in us for the employment of that blood, which we should else but little think of, and less admire. Our gratitude is so small to God, as well as man, that the first obligations are soon forgot, if we stand not in need of fresh ones successively to second them; we should lose our thankful remembrance of the first virtue of Christ's blood in washing us, if our infirmities did not mind us, of fresh reiterations and applications of it. Our Saviour's office of advocacy was erected especially for sins committed after a justified and renewed state. 1 *John* 2. 1. We should scarce remember we had an advocate, and scarce make use of him without some sensible necessity; but our remainders of sin discover our impotency, and an impossibility for us either to expiate our sin, or conform to the law, which necessitates us to have recourse to that person whom God hath appointed to make up the breaches between God and us.

So the apostle wraps up himself in the covenant of grace and his interest in Christ, after his conflict with sin. *I thank God through Jesus Christ.* Now, after such a body of death, a principle within me that sends up daily steams; yet as long as I serve God with my mind, as long as I keep the main condition of the covenant, *there is no condemnation. Rom.* 8. 1. Christ takes my part, procures my acceptance, and holds the band of salvation firm in his hands. The brightness of Christ's

grace, is set off by the darkness of our sin. We should not understand the sovereignty of his medicines, if there were no relics of sin for him to exercise his skill upon: the physician's art is most tried, and therefore most valued in relapses, as dangerous as the former disease. As the wisdom of God brought our Saviour into temptation, that he might have compassion to us; so it permits us to be overcome by temptation, that we might have a higher value of him.

3. God hereby often engages the soul to a *greater industry for his glory.* The greatest persecutors, when they have become converts, have been the greatest champions for that cause they both hated and oppressed. The apostle Paul is such an instance of this, that it needs no enlargement. By how much they have failed of answering the end of their creation in glorifying God; by so much the more they summon up all their force for such an end, after their conversion; to restore as much as they can of that glory to God, which they by their sin had robbed him of. Their sins, by the order of divine wisdom, prove whetstones to sharpen the edge of their spirits for God. Paul never remembered his persecuting fury, but he doubled his industry for the service of God, which before he trampled under his feet.

Our Saviour, after his resurrection, put Peter upon the exercise of that love to him, which had so lately shrunk from suffering, *John* 21. 15, 16, 17; and no doubt, but the consideration of his base denial, together with reflection upon a gracious pardon, engaged his ingenuous soul to stronger flames of affection. A believer's courage for God is more sharpened oftentimes by the shame of his fall; he endeavours to repair the faults of his ingratitude and disingenuity, by larger and stronger steps of obedience. As a man in a fight, having been foiled by his enemy, re-assumes new courage by his fall; and is many times obliged to his foil, both for his spirit and his victory. A gracious heart will, upon the very motions to sin, double its vigour, as well as by good ones; it is usually more quickened both in its motion *to* God and *for* God, by the temptations and motions to

sin. This is another good the wisdom of God brings forth from sin.

4. Divine wisdom brings forth from the occasion of sin, *humility towards God.* By this God beats down all good opinion of ourselves. Hezekiah was more humbled by his fall into pride, than by all the distress he had been in by Sennacherib's army, 2 *Chron.* 32. 26. Peter's confidence before his fall, gave way to an humble modesty after it; you see his confidence; *Though all should be offended in thee, yet will not I, Mark* 14. 24, and you have the mark of his modesty; it is not then, Lord, I will love thee to the death; but *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee, John* 21. 17. I cannot assure myself of any thing after this miscarriage; but, Lord, thou knowest there is a principle of love in me to thy name; he was ashamed, that himself who appeared such a pillar, should bend as meanly as a shrub to a temptation. The reflection upon sin, lays a man as low as hell in his humiliation, as the commission of sin did in the merit. When David comes to exercise repentance for his sin, he begins it from the fountain head of sin, his original corruption, and draws down the streams of it to the last commission, *Psal.* 51. 5. Perhaps he did not so seriously humble himself for the sin of his nature all his days, so much as at that time; at least, we have not such evidences of it. And *Hezekiah humbled himself*, not only for the pride of his *act*, but *for the pride of his heart*, which was the spring of that pride in act, in *shewing his* treasures to the Babylonish ambassadors, 2 *Chron.* 32. 36. God lets sin continue in the hearts of the best in this world, and sometimes gives the reins to Satan, and a man's own corruption, to keep up a sense of the ancient sale we made of ourselves to both.

II. In regard of *ourselves.* Herein is the wonder of divine wisdom, that God many times makes a sin, which meritoriously fits us for hell, a providential occasion to fit us for heaven; when it is an occasion of a more humble faith and believing humility, and of a thorough sanctification and growth in grace, which prepares us for a state of glory.

1. He makes use of one sin's breaking out *to discover more*; and so brings us to self-abhorrence and indignation against sin. Perhaps David, before his gross fall, thought he had no hypocrisy in him. We often find him appealing to God for his integrity, and desiring God to *try him*, if any guile could be found in his heart, as if he could find none himself; but his lapse into that great wickedness makes him discern much falseness in his soul, when he desires God to *renew a right spirit* within him, and speaks of *truth in the inward parts*, *Psal.* 51. 6, 10. The stirring of one corruption, makes that evil appear, which before the soul did not suspect. No man would think there were so great a cloud of smoke contained in a little stick of wood, were it not for the powerful operation of the fire, that both discovers and separates it. Job, who cursed the day of his birth, and uttered many impatient expressions against God upon the account of his own integrity; upon his recovery from his affliction, and God's close application of himself, was wrought to a greater abhorrence of himself, than ever we read he was exercised in before, *Job* 42. 6. The hostile acts of sin increase the soul's hatred of it; and the deeper our humiliations are for it, the stronger impressions of abhorrence are made upon us.

2. He often orders it, to make *conscience more tender*, and the soul *more watchful*. He that finds by his calamity, his enemy to have more strength against him than he suspected, will double his guards and quicken his diligence against him. A being overtaken by some sin, is by the wisdom of God disposed to make us more fearful of cherishing any occasion to inflame it, and watchful against every motion of it. By a fall, the soul hath more experience of the deceitfulness of the heart; and by observing its methods, is rendered better able to watch against them. It is our ignorance of the devices of Satan, and our own hearts, that makes us obnoxious to their surprises. A fall into one sin is often a prevention of more which lay in wait for us: as the fall of a small body into an ambush, prevents the design of the enemy upon a greater. As God suffers heresies in the

church, to try our faith; so he suffers sins to remain, and sometimes to break out, to try our watchfulness. This advantage he brings from them, to steel our resolutions against the same sins, and quicken our circumspection for the future against new surprizes by temptation. David's sin was *ever before him*, *Psal.* 51. 3, and made his conscience cry, blood, blood, upon every occasion; he refused the *water of the well of Bethlehem*, 2 *Sam.* 23. 16, 17, because it was gained with the hazard of lives; he could endure nothing that had the taste of blood in it. Our fear of a thing depends much upon a trial of it; a child will not fear too near approaches to the fire, till he feels the smart of it. Mortification does not wholly suppress the motions of sin, though it does the resolutions to commit it; but that there will be a proneness in the relics of it, to entice a man into those faults, which upon sight of their blemishes cost him so many tears. As great sicknesses after the cure are more watched, and the body humoured, that a man might not fall from the craziness they have left in him; which he is apt to do, if relapses are not carefully provided against. A man becomes more careful of any thing that may contribute to the resurrection of an expired disease.

3. God makes it an occasion of the *mortification of that sin* which was the matter of the fall. The liveliness of one sin in a renewed man, many times occasions the death of it. A wild beast, while kept close in a den, is secure in its life; but when it breaks out to rapine, it makes the master resolve to prevent any further mischief by the death of it. The impetuous stirring of a humour in a disease, is sometimes critical, and a prognostic of the strength of nature against it, whereby the disease loseth its strength by its struggling, and by degrees makes room for health. One sin is used by God for the destruction both of itself and others; as the flesh of a scorpion cures the biting of it. It sometimes by wounding us loseth its sting, and like the bee renders itself incapable of a second revenge. Peter, after his gross denial, never denied his Master afterwards. The sin

that lay undiscovered, is by a fall become visible, and so more obvious to a mortifying stroke. The soul lays the faster hold on Christ and the promise, and goes out against that enemy in the name of that Lord of hosts of which he was too negligent before; and therefore as he proves more strong, so more successful; he hath more strength, because he hath less confidence in himself, and more in God, the prime strength of his soul.

As it was with Christ, so it is with us, while Satan was bruising his *heel*, he was bruising his *head;* and while Satan is bruising our heel, the God of peace and wisdom is sometimes bruising his head both in us and for us; so that the strugglings of sin are often as the faint groans or bitings of a beast that is ready to expire. It is just with a man sometimes, as with a running fountain that hath mud at the bottom, when it is stirred the mud tinctures and defiles it all over; yet some of that mud hath a vent with the streams which run from it, so that when it is re-settled at the bottom, it is not so much in quantity as it was before. Thus God by his wisdom weakens the sin, by permitting it to stir and defile.

4. Sometimes divine wisdom makes it an occasion to *promote sanctification* in all parts of the soul. As the working of one ill humour in the body, is by the use of means an occasion of cashiering not only that, but others which perhaps were not known. As a man that is a little cold, doth not think of the fire; but if he slips with one foot into an icy puddle, he hastens to the fire, whereby not only that part, but all the rest receive warmth and strength upon that occasion; or, as if a person fall into the mire, his clothes are washed; and by that means cleansed, not only from the filth at present contracted, but from the former spots that were before unregarded. God by his wisdom brings secret sins to a discovery, and thereby cleanseth the soul of them. David's fall might be ordered as an answer to his former petition, *Cleanse thou me from my secret sins, Psal.* 19. 12, and as he earnestly prayed after his fall, so no doubt but he endeavoured a thorough sanctification, *Purge me, wash me, Psal.* 51. 7, and that he meant not only a santifica-

tion from that single sin, but from all, root and branch, is evident by that complaint of the flaw in his nature, ver. 5. the dross and chaff which lies in the heart is hereby discovered, and an opportunity administered of throwing it out, and searching all the heart to discover where it lay. As God sometimes takes occasion from one sin to reckon with men in a way of justice for others; so he sometimes takes occasion from the commission of one sin, to bring out all the actions against the sinner, to make him, in a way of gracious wisdom, set more cordially upon the work of sanctification. A great fall sometimes hath been the occasion of a man's conversion. The fall of mankind occasioned a more blessed restoration; and the falls of particular believers oft times occasion a more extensive sanctification. Thus the *only wise God* makes poisons in nature to become medicines in a way of grace.

5. Hereby the growth in *grace is furthered*.. It is a wonder of divine wisdom to substract sometimes his grace from a person, and let him fall into sin, thereby to occasion the increase of habitual grace in him, and to augment it by those ways that seemed to depress it. By making sins an occasion of a more vigorous acting the contrary grace, the wisdom of God makes our corruptions in their own nature destructive to become profitable to us. Grace often breaks out more strongly afterwards, as the sun with its heat after it hath been masked and interrupted with mist: they often, through the mighty working of the Spirit, make us more humble, and *humility fits us to receive more grace from God*, *James* 4. 6. How does faith, that sunk under the waves, lift up its head again, and carry the soul out with a greater liveliness? What ardours of love, what floods of repenting tears, what severity of revenge, what horrors at the remembrance of the sin, what tremblings at the appearance of a second temptation? So that grace seems to be awakened to a *new* and more vigorous *life*, 2 *Cor*. 7. 11. The broken joint is many times stronger in the rupture than it was before. The luxuriancy of the branches of corruption is an occasion of purging, which is designed

to make grace more fruitful; *he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit, John* 15. 2.

Thus divine wisdom both sharpens and brightens us by the dust of sin, and ripens and mellows the fruits of grace by the means of corruption. Grace grows the stronger by opposition, as the fire burns hottest and clearest when it is most surrounded by a cold air; and our natural heat reassumes a new strength by the coldness of the winter. The soil under a diamond, though an imperfection in itself, increaseth the beauty and lustre of the stone. The enmity of man was a commendation of the grace of God: it occasioned the breaking out of the grace of God upon us, and is an occasion, by the wisdom and grace of God, of the increase of grace many times in us. How should the consideration of God's incomprehensible wisdom, in the management of evil, swallow us up in admiration; who brings forth such beauty, such eminent discoveries of himself, such excellent good to the creature out of the bowels of the greatest contrarieties, making dark shadows serve to display and beautify to our apprehensions the divine glory? If evil were not in the world, men would not know what good is: they would not behold the lustre of divine wisdom; as without night we could not understand the beauty of the day. Though God is not the *author* of sin, because of his holiness, yet he is the administrator of sin by his wisdom, and accomplishes his own purposes, by the iniquities of his enemies, and the lapses and the infirmities of his friends.

PART V.

THE WISDOM OF GOD GLORIFIED IN THE CONVERSION OF MAN.

The subjects of conversion—The seasons of conversion—Conversion of Saul—The manner of conversion—The wisdom of God in penal evils—Judgments—Punishments and afflictions—The gracious issue of afflictions and penal evil—The various ends accomplished by afflictions—Divine wisdom displayed in the deliverances afforded to other parts of the world as well as the church—Creatures in their natural order made subservient to the purposes of God—The time of deliverance—The choice and adoption of instruments for effecting his gracious purposes.

III. THE wisdom of God appears, *thirdly*, in the *government of man in his conversion and return to him.* If there be a counsel in framing the lowest creature, and in the minutest passages of providence; there must needs be a higher wisdom in the government of the creature to a supernatural end, and framing the soul to be a monument of his glory. The wisdom of God is seen with more admiration, and in more varieties by the angels in the church, than in the creation; that is, in forming a church out of the rubbish of the world, out of contrarieties and contradictions to him; which is greater than the framing a celestial and elementary world out of a rude chaos. The most glorious bodies in the world, even those of the sun, moon, and stars, have not such stamps of

divine skill upon them, as the soul of man; nor is there so much of wisdom in the fabric and faculties of that, as in the reduction of a blind, wilful, rebellious soul to its own happiness, and God's glory; *He worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will, that we should be for the praise of his glory*, *Eph.* 1. 11, 12. If all things, then this, which is none of the least of his works: to the praise of the glory of his goodness in his work, and to the praise of the rule of his work, his counsel in both the act of his will, and the act of his wisdom. The restoring of the beauty of the soul, and its fitness for its true end, speaks no less wisdom, than the first draught of it in creation: and the application of redemption, and bringing forth the fruits of it, is as well an act of his prudence, as the contrivance was of his counsel. Divine wisdom appears,

1. In the *subjects* of conversion. His goodness reigns in the very dust, and he erects the walls and ornaments of his temple from the clay and mud of the world: he passes over the *wise*, and *noble*, and *mighty*, that may pretend some grounds of boasting in their own natural or acquired endowments; and pitches upon the most contemptible materials, wherewith to build a spiritual tabernacle for himself, *the foolish and weak things of the world*, 1 *Cor.* 1. 26, 27; those that are naturally most unfit for it, and most refractory to it. Herein lies the skill of an architect, to render the most knotty, crooked, and unlikely pieces, by his art, subservient to his main design. Thus God hath ordered from the beginning of the world, contrary tempers, various humours, divers nations, as stones of several natures, to be a building for himself, *fitly framed together*, and to be his own family. 1 *Cor.* 3. 9. Who will question the skill that alters a black jet into a clear chrystal, a glow-worm into a star, a lion into a lamb, and a swine into a dove? The more intricate and knotty any business is, the more eminent is any man's ability and prudence, in untying the knots and bringing it to a good issue. The more desperate the disease, the more admirable is the physician's skill in the cure.

He fixes upon men for his service, who have natural dispositions to serve him in such ways as he disposes of them, after their conversion: so Paul was naturally a conscientious man; what he did against Christ was from the dictates of an erroneous conscience, governed by the Pharisaical interpretations of the Jewish law: he had a strain of zeal to prosecute what his depraved reason and conscience inform him in. God pitches upon this man, and works him in the fire for his service: he alters not his natural disposition, to make him of a constitution and temper contrary to what he was before; but directs it to another object, gives another bias to the soul, and makes his ill-governed dispositions move in a new way of his own appointment, and guided that natural heat to the service of that interest, which he was before ambitious to extirpate. As a high mettled horse, when left to himself, creates both disturbance and danger; but under the conduct of a wise rider, moves regularly; not by a change of his natural fierceness, but a skilful management of the beast to the rider's purpose.

2. In the *seasons* of conversion. The prudence of man consists in the timeing the execution of his counsels; and no less does the wisdom of God consist in this. As he is a *God of judgment*, or wisdom, he waits to introduce his grace into the soul in the fittest season. This attribute, Paul in the story of his own conversion puts a particular remark upon, which he does not upon any other, in the catalogue he reckons up, *Now unto the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.* 1 *Tim.* 1. 17. A most solemn doxology, wherein wisdom sits upon the throne above all the rest, with a special *amen* to the glory of it; which refers to the timeing of his mercy so to Paul, as made most for the glory of his grace, and the encouragement of others from him as the pattern. God took him at a time, when he was upon the brink of hell; when he was ready to devour the new-born infant church at Damascus; when he was armed with all the authority from without, and fired with all the zeal from within, for the prosecution of his design: *then* God seizeth upon him, and runs

him in a channel for his own honour, and his creatures' happiness.

It is observable how God kept his eye upon Paul all along in his furious course, and lets him have the reins without putting his hand to bridle him; yet no motion he could take but the eye of God runs along with him: he suffered him *to kick against the pricks* of miracles, and the convincing discourse of Stephen, at his martyrdom. There were many that voted for Stephen's death, as the witnesses that flung the stones first at him; but they are not named, only Saul who testified his approbation as well as the rest, and that by watching the witnesses' cloaths while they were about that bloody work, *the witnesses laid their cloaths at a young man's feet, named Saul, Acts* 7. 58.

Again, though multitudes were consenting to his death, yet, *Acts* 8. 1, Saul only is mentioned. God's eye is upon him, yet he would not at that time stop his fury. He goes on further, and makes *havock of the church, Acts* 8. 3. He had surely many more accomplices, but none are named but Saul: yet God would not reach out his hand to change him, but eyes him, waiting for a fitter opportunity, which in his wisdom he foresaw. And therefore the Spirit of God adds a *yet; Saul yet breathing out threatenings, Acts* 9. 1. It was not God's time *yet*, but it would be shortly. But when Saul was putting in execution his design against the church of Damascus, when the devil was in the height of his hopes, and Saul in the height of his fury, and the christians sunk into the depth of their fears; the wisdom of God lays hold of the opportunity, and by Paul's conversion at this season, defeats Satan, disappoints the high priests, shields his people, discharges their fears by pulling Saul out of Satan's hands, and forming Satan's instrument to a holy activity against him.

3. The wisdom of God appears in the *manner* of conversion. So great a change God makes, not by the destruction but with the preservation of, and suitableness to nature. As the devil tempts us, not by offering violence to our natures, but by proposing things conveni-

ent to our corrupt natures; so God solicits us to return, by proposals suited to our faculties. As he does in nature convey nourishment to men by means of the fruits of the earth, and produces the fruits of the earth by the influences of heaven; the influences of heaven do not force the earth, but excite that natural virtue and strength which is in it. So God produces grace in the soul by the means of the word fitted to the capacity of man, as man, and proportioned to his rational faculties, as rational.

It would be contrary to the wisdom of God to move man like a stone, to invert the order and privilege of that nature which he settled in creation; for then God would in vain have given man understanding and will; because without moving men according to those faculties, they would remain unprofitable and unuseful in man. * God does not reduce us to himself as logs, by mere force; or as slaves forced by a cudgel, to go forth to that place, and do that work to which they have no disposition; but he accommodates himself to those foundations he hath laid in our nature, and guides us in a way agreeable thereunto, by an action as sweet as powerful; clearing our understandings of dark principles whereby we may see his truth, our own misery, and the seat of our happiness; and bending our wills according to this light to desire and move conveniently to this end of our calling: efficaciously, yet agreeably; powerfully, yet without imposing on our natural faculties; † sweetly without violence in ordering the means, but effectually without failing in accomplishing the end. And therefore the scripture calls it, *teaching*, *John* 6. 45. *Alluring*, *Hos.* 2. 14. *Calling us to seek the Lord*, *Psal.* 27. 8. *Teaching*, is an act of wisdom: *alluring* an act of love: *calling* an act of authority: but none of them argue a violent constraint. The principle that moves the will is supernatural; but the will, as a natural faculty, concurs in the act or motion.

God does not act in a way of absolute power with-

* Daille sur. Philip. Part 1. p. 545, 546. † Sanderson, part 2. p. 205.

out an infinite wisdom, suiting himself to the nature of the things he acts upon: he does not change the *physical* nature, though he does the *moral*. As in the government of the world, he does not make heavy things ascend, nor light things descend, ordinarily; but guides their motions according to their natural qualities: so God does not strain the faculties beyond their due pitch. He lets the nature of the faculty remain; but changes the principle in it: the understanding remains understanding, and the will remains will. But where there was before folly in the understanding, he puts in a spirit of wisdom; and where there was before stubbornness in the will, he forms it to a pliableness to his offers. He hath a key to fit every ward in the lock, and opens the will without injuring the nature of the will.

He does not change the soul by an alteration of the faculties, but by an alteration of something in them: not by an inroad upon them, or by mere power or blind instinct; but by proposing to the understanding something to be known, and informing it of the reasonableness of his precepts, and the innate goodness and excellency of his offers, and by inclining the will to love and embrace what is proposed. And things are proposed under those notions, which usually move our wills and affections. We are moved by things as they are good, pleasant, profitable; we entertain things as they make for us, and detest things as they are contrary to us. Nothing affects us but under such qualities; and God suits his encouragements to the natural affections which are in us: his power and wisdom go hand in hand, his power to act what his wisdom orders, and his wisdom to conduct what his power executes. He brings men to him in ways suited to their natural dispositions. The stubborn he tears like a lion, the gentle he wins like a turtle, by sweetness; he hath a hammer to break the stout, and a cord of love to draw the more pliable tempers: he works upon the more rational in a way of gospel reason; upon the more ingenuous in a way of kindness, and draws them by *the cords of love*. The wise-men were led to Christ by a star, and means suited to the knowledge and

study that those eastern nations used, which was much in astronomy: he worketh upon others by miracles accommodated to every one's sense, and so proportions the means according to the nature of the subjects he works upon.

Fourthly. The wisdom of God is apparent in *his discipline* and *penal evils.* The wisdom of human governments is seen in the matter of their laws, in the penalties of their laws, in the proportion of the punishment to the offence, and in the good that redounds from the punishment either to the offender or to the community. The wisdom of God is seen in the penalty of death upon the transgression of his law; both in that it was the greatest evil that man might fear, and so was a convenient means to keep him in his due bound, and also in the proportion of it to the transgression. Nothing less could be in a wise justice inflicted upon an offender for a crime against the highest being, and the supreme excellency: but this hath been spoken of before, in the wisdom of his laws. I shall only mention some few.

1. His wisdom appears in *judgments,* in the suiting them to the qualities of persons, and nature of sins. He *deviseth evil, Jer.* 18. 11, his judgments are fruits of counsel. *He also is wise, and will bring evil, Isa.* 31. 2. Evil suitable to the person offending, and evil suitable to the offence committed: as the husbandman does his threshing instruments to the grain: he hath a rod for the *cummin,* a tenderer seed, and a flail for the harder; so hath God greater judgments for the obdurate sinner, and lighter for those that have something of tenderness in their wickedness; so some understand the place, *With the froward he will shew himself froward, Isa.* 28. 27, 29.

He proportions punishment to sin, and writes the cause of the judgment in the forehead of the judgment itself. Sodom burned in lust, and was consumed by *fire from heaven.* The Jews sold Christ for thirty pence; and at the taking of Jerusalem thirty of them were sold for a penny. So Adonibezek *cut off the thumbs and great toes* of others, and he is served in the same kind, *Judges* 1. 7. The Babel builders designed an indissoluble union, and

God brings upon them an unintelligible confusion. And in *Exod.* 9. 9, the *ashes of the furnace*, where the Israelites burnt the Egyptian bricks, sprinkled towards heaven, brought boils upon the Egyptians' bodies, that they might feel in their own, what pain they had caused in the Israelites' flesh; and find by the smart of the inflamed scab, what they had made the Israelites endure. The waters of the river Nile are *turned into blood*, wherein they had stifled the breath of the Israelites' infants: and at last the prince, and the flower of their nobility, are drowned in the Red Sea. It is part of the wisdom of justice to proportion punishment to the crime, and the degrees of wrath to the degrees of malice in the sin. Afflictions also are wisely proportioned: God, as a wise physician, considers the nature of the humour and strength of the patient, and suits his medicines both to the one and the other, 1 *Cor.* 10. 13.

2. *In the seasons* of punishments and afflictions. He stays till sin be ripe, that his justice may appear more equitable, and the offender more inexcusable, *he watches upon the evil to bring it upon men*, *Dan.* 9. 14. To bring it in the just season and order, his righteous purpose on the enemies, and his gracious purpose on his people. Jerusalem's calamity came upon them when the city was full of people at the solemnity of the passover, that he might mow down his enemies at once, and time their destruction to such a moment wherein they had timed the crucifixion of his Son. He watched over the clouds of his judgments, and kept them from pouring down, till his people the christians were provided for, and had departed out of the city to the place God had provided for them. He made not *Jerusalem* the shambles for his enemies, until he had made *Pellas* the ark of his friends. As Pliny tells us, the providence of God holds the seas in a calm for fifteen days, that the Halcyons, little birds, that frequent the shore may build their nests, and hatch their young. The judgment upon Sodom was suspended for some hours, until Lot was secured.

* God suffered not the church to be invaded by perse-

* Daille sur 1 Cor. 10. p. 399

cutions, till she was established in the faith: he would not expose her to great combats, while she was weak and feeble, but gave her time to fortify herself, to be rendered more capable of bearing up under them. He stifled all the motions of passion the idolators might have for their superstition, until religion was in such a condition, as rather to be increased and purified than extinguished by opposition. Paul was secured from Nero's chains, and the nets of his enemies, until he had broke off the chain of Satan from many cities of the Gentiles, and caught them by the net of the gospel out of the sea of the world.

3. The wisdom of God is apparent in the gracious *issue of afflictions and penal evils.* It is a part of wisdom to bring good out of the evil of punishment, as well as to bring good out of sin. The church never was so like to heaven, as when it was most persecuted by hell: the storms often cleansed it, and the lance often made it more healthful. Job's integrity had not been so clear, nor his patience so illustrious, had not the devil been permitted to afflict him. God by his wisdom outwits Satan; when he by his temptations intends to pollute us and buffet us, God orders it to purify us; he often brings the clearest light out of the thickest darkness, and makes poisons become medicines. *Death itself, the greatest punishment in this life, and the entrance into hell, in its own nature, he hath by his wise contrivance, made to his people the gate of heaven, and the passage into immortality. Penal evils in a nation often end in public advantage: troubles and wars among a people are many times not destroying, but medicinal, and cure them of that degeneracy, luxury, and effeminateness, they contracted by a long peace.

4. This wisdom is evident in *the various ends* which God brings about by afflictions. The attainment of various ends by one and the same means, is the fruit of the agent's prudence. By the same affliction, the wise God corrects sometimes for some base affection, excites some sleepy grace, drives out some lurking cor-

* Turretin, Serm. p. 53.

ruption, refines the soul, and ruins the lust; discovers the greatness of a crime, the vanity of the creature, and the sufficiency in himself.

The Jews bind Paul, and by the judge he is sent to Rome; while his mouth is stopped in Judea, it is opened in one of the greatest cities of the world, and his enemies unwittingly contribute to the increase of the knowledge of Christ by those chains in that city that triumphed over the earth, *Acts* 28. 31. And his afflictive bonds added courage and resolution to others, *Many waxing confident by my bonds, Phil.* 1. 14, which could not in their own nature produce such an effect, but by the order and contrivance of Divine Wisdom: in their own nature, they would rather make them disgust the doctrine he suffered for, and cool their zeal in propagating it, for fear of the same disgrace and hardship they saw him suffer. * But the wisdom of God changed the nature of these fetters, and conducted them to the glory of his name, the encouragement of others, the increase of the gospel, and the comfort of the apostle himself, *Phil.* 1. 12, 13, 18. The sufferings of Paul at Rome confirmed the Philippians, a people at a distance from thence, in the doctrine they had already received at his hands. Thus God makes sufferings sometimes which appear like judgments, to be like the viper on Paul's hands, *Acts* 28. 6, a means to clear up innocence, and procure favour to the doctrine among the Barbarians. How often has he multiplied the church by death and massacres, and increased it by those means used to annihilate it?

Fifthly, The Divine Wisdom is apparent in the deliverances he affords to *other parts of the world,* as well as to his church. There are delicate composures, curious threads in his webs, and he works them like an artificer. *A goodness wrought* for them, *curiously wrought, Psal.* 31. 19.

1. In making *the creatures subservient* in their natural order to his gracious ends and purposes. He orders things in such a manner, as not to be necessitated to put

* Daille sur Phillip. Parta. pag. 116, 117.

forth an extraordinary power in things, which some part of the creation might accomplish. Miraculous productions would speak his power; but the ordering the natural course of things, to occasion such effects they were never intended for, is one part of the glory of his wisdom. And that his wisdom may be seen in the course of nature, he conducts the notions of creatures, and acts them in their own strength; and does that by various windings and turnings, which he might do in an instant in a supernatural way. Indeed, sometimes he hath made invasions on nature, and suspended the order of their natural law for a season, to shew himself the absolute Lord and Governor of nature: yet if frequent alterations of this nature were made, they would impede the knowledge of the nature of things, and be some bar to the discovery and glory of his wisdom; which is best seen by moving the wheels of inferior creatures in an exact regularity to his own ends. He might, when his little church in Jacob's family was like to starve in Canaan, have for their preservation turned the stones of the country into bread; but he sends them down to Egypt to procure corn, that a way may be opened for their removal into that country; the truth of his prediction in their captivity accomplished, and a way made after the declaration of his great name Jehovah, both in the fidelity of his word, and the greatness of his power, in their deliverance from that furnace of affliction. He might have struck Goliah, the captain of the Philistine army, with a thunderbolt from heaven, when he blasphemed his name and scared his people; but he useth the natural strength of a stone, and the artificial motion of a sling, by the arm of David, to confront the giant, and thereby to free Judea from the ravage of a potent enemy. He might have delivered the Jews from Babylon by as strange miracles as he used in their deliverance from Egypt: he might have plagued their enemies, gathered his people into a body, and protected them by the bulwark of a *cloud* and a *pillar of fire*, against the assaults of their enemies. But he uses the differences between the Persians and those of Babylon, to accomplish his ends. How sometimes hath the veering about of the

wind on a sudden been the loss of a navy, when it hath been upon the point of victory, and driven back the destruction upon those which intended it for others? And the accidental stumbling, or the natural fierceness of a horse, flung down a general in the midst of a battle, where he hath lost his life, and his death hath brought defeat to his army, and deliverance to the other party, that were upon the brink of ruin? Thus doth the wisdom of God link things together according to natural order, to work out his intended preservation of a people.

2. In the *season* of deliverance. The timeing of affairs is a part of the wisdom of man, and an eminent part of the wisdom of God. It is in *due season* he sends the *former and the latter rain*, when the earth is in the greatest indigence, and when his influences may most contribute to the bringing forth and ripening the fruit. The dumb creatures have *their meat from him in due season*, *Psal.* 104. 27. And in his due season, his people have their deliverance. When Paul was upon his journey to Damascus with a persecuting commission, he is struck down for the security of the church in that city. The nature of the lion is changed in due season for the preservation of the lambs. The Israelites are miraculously rescued from Egypt, when their wits were at a loss, when their danger to human understanding was unavoidable; when earth and sea refused protection, then the wisdom and power of heaven stepped in to effect that which was past the skill of the conductors of that multitude. And when the lives of the Jews lay at the stake, and their necks were upon the block at the mercy of their enemies' swords by an order from Shushan; not only a reprieve, but a triumph arrives to the Jews, by the wisdom of God guiding the affair, whereby of persons designed to execution, they are made conquerors, and have opportunity to exercise their revenge instead of their patience, proving triumphers whereby they expected to be sufferers, *Esth.* 8, and 9.

How strangely does God by secret ways bow the hearts of men, and the nature of things to the execution of that which he designs, notwithstanding all the resis-

tance of that which would traverse the security of his people? How often does he trap the wicked in the work of their own hands, make their confidence to become their ruin, and ensnare them in those nets they wrought and laid for others? *The wicked is snared in the works of his own hands, Psal.* 9. 16. *He scatters the proud in the imagination of their hearts, Luke* 1. 51, in the height of their hopes, when their designs have been laid so deep in the foundation, and cemented so close in their superstructure, that no human power or wisdom could raise them. He hath then disappointed their projects, and befooled their craft. How often hath he kept back the fire, when it hath been ready to devour; broke the arrows when they have been prepared in the bow; turned the spear upon the bearers, and inflicted the deadly wound at the very instant they were ready to wound others.

3. In *suiting instruments to his purpose.* He either finds them fit, or makes them on a sudden fit for his gracious ends. If he hath a tabernacle to build, he will fit a Bezaleel and Aholiab with the spirit of wisdom and understanding in all *cunning workmanship, Exod.* 31. 3, 6. If he finds them crooked pieces, he can, like a wise architect, make them straight beams for the rearing of his house, and for the honour of his name. He sometimes picks out men, according to their natural tempers, and employs them in his work. Jehu, a man of a furious temper, and ambitious spirit, is called out for the destruction of Ahab's house. Moses, a man furnished with all Egyptian wisdom, fitted by a generous education, prepared also by the affliction he met with in his flight, and one who had had the benefit of conversation with Jethro, a man of more than an ordinary wisdom and goodness, as appears by his prudent and religious counsel; this man is called out to be the head and captain of an oppressed people, and to rescue them from their bondage, and settle the first national church in the world. So Elijah, a high spirited man, of a hot and angry temper, one that slighted the frowns, and undervalued the favour of princes, is set up to stem the torrent of the *Israelitish*

idolatry. So Luther, a man of the same temper, is drawn out by the same wisdom to encounter the corruptions of the church against such opposition, which a milder temper would have sunk under. The *earth,* in *Rev.* 12. 16, is made an instrument *to help the woman;* when the grandees of that age transferred the imperial power upon Constantine, who became afterwards a protecting and nursing father to the church, an end which many of his favourers never designed, nor ever dreamed of; but God by his infinite wisdom made these several designs, like several arrows shot at random, meet in one mark to which he directed them, viz. in bringing forth an instrument to give peace to the world, and security and increase to his church.

PART VI.

THE REDEMPTION OF MAN.

The wisdom of God wonderfully displayed in redemption—Hidden wisdom—Manifold wisdom—Justice and mercy reconciled—How justice pleads—Mercy—The person in whom justice and mercy are reconciled—Union of two natures in Christ—Manner of this union—Does not confound the properties of Deity—A perpetual union—Personal—The design of it—To qualify him for the work of mediation—To promote, secure, and perfect the happiness of his redeemed—The honour of the law vindicated—Hatred of sin and love to the sinner manifested—Overturning Satan's empire in the nature he had vanquished—A ground of hope,—An incentive to obedience—Employing the fruits of redemption by faith—The manner of publishing the doctrine of it.

THIRDLY. THE wisdom of God wonderfully appears in *redemption.* His wisdom in creation delights the eye and understanding; his wisdom in government, no less affects a curious observer of the links and concatenation of the means; but his wisdom in redemption raises the mind to greater astonishment. The works of creation are the *footsteps* of his wisdom; the work of redemption is the *face* of his wisdom: a man is better known by the features of his face than by the prints of his feet. We with *open face,* or *a revealed face, beholding the glory of the Lord,* 2 *Cor.* 3. 18. *Face* there, refers to God, not to us; the glory of God's wisdom is now open, and no

longer veiled by the shadows of the law. As we behold the light glorious, as scattered in the air before the appearance of the sun, but more gloriously in the face of the sun, when it begins its race in our horizon. All the wisdom of God in creation and government in his variety of laws, was like the light, the three first days of the creation, dispersed about the world, but the fourth day it was more glorious, when all gathered into the body of the sun. *Gen.* 1. 4, 16. So the light of divine wisdom and glory was scattered about the world, and so more obscure, till the fourth divine day of the world about the four thousandth year, it was gathered into one body, the Sun of righteousness, and so shone out more gloriously to men and angels. All things are weaker, the thinner they are extended, but stronger, the more they are united and compacted in one body and appearance. In Christ, in the dispensation by him, as well as in his person, were *hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, Coloss.* 2. 3. Some rays of wisdom were united in creation, but the treasures of it opened in redemption; the highest degrees of it that ever God exerted in the world.—Christ is therefore called the *wisdom of God,* as well as the *power of God,* 1 *Cor.* 1. 24, and the gospel is called the *wisdom of God.* Christ is the wisdom of God principally, and the gospel instrumentally, as it is the power of God instrumentally to subdue the heart to himself. This is wrapped up in the appointment of Christ as Redeemer, and opened to us in the revelation of it by the gospel.

1. It is a *hidden* wisdom. In this regard God is said in the text, to be *only wise;* and it is said to be a *hidden wisdom,* 1 *Tim.* 1. 17, and *wisdom in a mystery,* 1 *Cor.* 2. 7, incomprehensible to the ordinary capacity of an angel, more than the abstruse qualities of the creatures are to the understanding of man. No wisdom of men or angels is able to search all the veins of this mine, to tell all the threads of this web, or to understand the lustre of it; they are as far from an ability fully to comprehend it, as they were at first to contrive it. That wisdom that invented it can only comprehend it. In

the uncreated understanding only there is a clearness of light without any shadow of darkness. We come as short of full apprehensions of it, as a child of the counsel of the wisest prince. It is so hidden from us, that without revelation, we could not have the least imagination of it, and though it be revealed to us, yet without the help of an infinite understanding, we cannot fully fathom it. It is such a tractate of divine wisdom, that the angels never before had seen the edition of it, till it was published to the world, *to the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church, the manifold wisdom of God, Eph.* 3. 10. Now made known to them, not before; and now made known to them in the *heavenly places.* They had not the knowledge of all heavenly mysteries, though they had the possession of heavenly glory: they knew the prophecies of it in the word, but attained not a clear interpretation of those prophecies, till the things that were prophecied of came upon the stage.

2. It is called *manifold* wisdom. As manifold as mysterious. Variety in the mystery, and mystery in every part of the variety. It was not one single act, but a variety of counsels met in it; a conjunction of excellent ends and excellent means. The glory of God, the salvation of man, the defeat of the apostate angels, the discovery of the blessed Trinity in their nature, operations, their combined and distinct acts and expressions of goodness: the means are the conjunction of two natures infinitely distant from one another; the union of eternity and time, of mortality and immortality: death is made the way to life, and shame the path to glory. The weakness of the cross is the reparation of man; and the creature is made wise by the *foolishness of preaching;* fallen man grows rich by the poverty of the Redeemer, and man is filled by the emptiness of God: the heir of hell made a son of God, by God's taking upon him the form of a servant; the son of man advanced to the highest degree of honour, by the Son of God becoming of *no reputation.*

It is called, *Eph.* 1. 8, *abundance of wisdom and pru-*

dence. Wisdom in the eternal counsel, contriving a way; prudence in the temporary revelation, ordering all affairs and occurrences in the world for the attaining the end of his counsel. Wisdom refers to the mystery; prudence to the manifestation of it in fit ways and convenient seasons. Wisdom, to the contrivance and order; prudence, to the execution and accomplishment. In all things God acted as *became* him, as a wise and just governor of the world. Whether the wisdom of God might not have found out some other way, or whether he were, in regard of the necessity and nature of his justice, limited to this, is not the question; but that it is the best and wisest way for the manifestation of his glory, is out of question. This wisdom will appear in the different interests reconciled by it. In the subject, the second person in the Trinity, wherein they were reconciled: in the two natures, wherein he accomplished it, whereby God is made known to man in his glory, sin eternally condemned, and the repenting and believing sinner eternally rescued. The honour and righteousness of the law vindicated both in the precept and penalty. The devil's empire overthrown by the same nature he had overturned, and the subtilty of hell defeated by that nature he had spoiled. The creature engaged in the very act to the highest obedience and humility, that as God appears as a God upon his throne, the creature might appear in the lowest posture of a creature, in the depths of resignation and dependence; the publication of this made in the gospel, by ways congruous to the wisdom which appeared in the execution of his counsel, and the conditions of enjoying the fruit of it, most wise and reasonable.

1. The *greatest different interests are reconciled,* justice in punishing, and mercy in pardoning. For man had broken the law, and plunged himself into a gulf of misery; the sword of vengeance was unsheathed by justice, for the punishment of the criminal; the bowels of compassion were stirred by mercy, for the rescue of the miserable. Justice severely beholds the sin, and mercy compassionately reflects upon the misery. Two different claims are entered by those concerned attributes: justice votes for

destruction, and mercy votes for salvation. Justice would draw the sword, and drench it in the blood of the offender; mercy would draw the sword, and turn it from the breast of the sinner; justice would edge it, and mercy would blunt it. The arguments are strong on both sides.

Justice pleads, "I arraign before the tribunal a rebel, who was the glorious work of thy hands, the centre of thy rich goodness, and a counterpart of thy own image; he is indeed miserable, whereby to excite thy compassion; but he is not miserable without being criminal. Thou didst create him in a state and with ability to be otherwise; the riches of thy bounty aggravate the blackness of his crime. He is a rebel not by necessity but *will*. What constraint was there upon him to listen to the counsels of the enemy of God? What force could there be upon him, since it is without the compass of any creature to work upon, or constrain the will? Nothing of ignorance can excuse him; the law was not ambiguously expressed, but in plain words, both as to precept and penalty, it was written in his nature in legible characters. Had he received any disgust from thee after his creation, it would not excuse his apostacy, since, as a sovereign, thou wert not obliged to thy creature. Thou hadst provided all things richly for him; he was crowned with glory and honour; thy infinite power had bestowed upon him an habitation richly furnished, and varieties of servants to attend him. Whatever he viewed without or within himself, were several marks of thy divine bounty, to engage him to obedience. Had there been some reason of any disgust, it could not have balanced that kindness which had so much reason to oblige him; however, he had received no courtesy from the fallen angel to oblige him to turn into his camp. Was it not enough that one of thy creatures would have stripped thee of the glory of heaven, but this also must deprive thee of thy glory upon earth, which was due from him to thee as his Creator? Can he charge the difficulty of the command? No; it was rather below than above his strength. He might rather complain that it was no higher, whereby his obedience and gratitude might have a larger scope, and a more

spacious field to move in, than a precept so light, so easy as to abstain from one fruit in the garden."

"What excuse can he have, that would prefer the gratification of his sense before the dictates of his reason, and the obligations of his creation? The law thou didst set him, was righteous and reasonable, and shall righteousness and reason be rejected by the supreme and infallible reason, because the rebellious creature hath trampled upon it? What! Must God abrogate his holy law, because the creature hath slighted it? What reflection will this be upon the wisdom that enacted it; and upon the equity of the command and sanction of it? Either man must suffer, or the holy law be expunged, and for ever out of date. And is it not better, man should eternally smart under his crime, than any dishonourable reflections of unrighteousness be cast upon the law, and of folly and want of foresight upon the lawgiver? Not to punish, would be to approve the devil's lie, and justify the creature's revolt. It would be a condemnation of thy own law as unrighteous, and a sentencing thy own wisdom as imprudent. Better man should for ever bear the punishment of his offence, than God bear the dishonour of his attributes; better man should be miserable, than God should be unrighteous, unwise, false, and tamely bear the denial of his sovereignty.

"But what advantage would it be to gratify mercy by pardoning the malefactor? Besides the irreparable dishonour to the law, the falsifying thy veracity in not executing the denounced threatening, he would receive encouragement by such grace to spurn more at thy sovereignty, and oppose thy holiness by running on in a course of sin with hopes of impunity. If the creature be restored, it cannot be expected that he that hath fared so well after the breach of it, should be very careful of a future observance. His easy readmission would abet him in the repetition of his offence, and thou shalt soon find him cast off all moral dependance on thee. Shall he be restored without any condition or covenant; he is a creature not to be governed without a law, and a law is not to be enacted without a penalty. What future regard

will he have to thy precept, or what fear will he have of thy threatening, if his crime be so lightly passed over? Is it the stability of thy word? What reason will he have to give credit to that which he hath found already disregarded by thyself? The truth of future threatenings will be of no force with him who hath experienced thy laying it aside in the former. It is necessary, therefore, that the rebellious creature should be punished for the preservation of the honour of the law, and the honour of the lawgiver, with all those perfections that are united in the composure of it."—But here,

Mercy appears, and offers her plea on behalf of the arraigned sinner, "It is true indeed the sin of man wants not its aggravations. He hath slighted thy goodness and accepted thy enemy as his counsellor; but it was not a pure act of his own, as the devil's revolt was. He had a tempter, and the devil had none: he had, I acknowledge, an understanding to know thy will, and a power to obey it; yet he was mutable and had a capacity to fall. It was no difficult task that was set him, nor a hard yoke that was laid upon him; yet he had a brutish part, as well as a rational, and sense as well as soul; whereas the fallen angel was a pure intellectual spirit. Did God create the world to suffer an eternal dishonour, in letting himself be outwitted by Satan, and his work wrested out of his hands? Shall the work of eternal counsel presently sink into irreparable destruction, and the honour of an almighty and wise work be lost in the ruin of the creature? This would seem contrary to the nature of thy goodness, to make man only to render him miserable; to design him in his creation for the service of the devil, and not for the service of his Creator. What else could be the issue if the chief work of thy hand, defaced presently after the erecting, should for ever remain in this marred condition; what can be expected upon the continuance of his misery, but a perpetual hatred and enmity of thy creature against thee? Did God in creation design his being hated, or his being loved by his creature? Shall God make a holy law, and have no obedience to that law from that creature whom it was made to govern?

Shall the curious workmanship of God, and the excellent engravings of the law of nature in his heart, be so soon defaced, and remain in that blotted condition for ever?"

"This fall thou couldst not but in thy infinite knowledge foresee; why hadst thou goodness then to create him in integrity, if thou wouldst not have mercy to pity him in misery? Shall thy enemy for ever trample upon the honour of thy work, and triumph over thy glory, and applaud himself in the success of his subtility? Shall thy creature only passively glorify thee as an avenger, and not actively as a Saviour? Am not I a perfection of thy nature as well as justice? Shall justice engross all, and I never come into view? It is resolved already, that the fallen angels shall have no interest in my plea; and I have now less reason than before to plead for them: they fell with a full consent of will, without any motion from another; and not content with their own apostacy they envy thee, and thy glory upon earth as well as in heaven, and have drawn into their party the best part of the creation below: shall Satan plunge the whole creation in the same irreparable ruin with himself; if the creature be restored, will he contract a boldness in sin by impurity? Hast thou not grace to render him ingenuous in obedience, as well as compassion to recover him from misery? What will hinder but that such grace, which hath established the standing angels, may establish this recovered creature? If I am utterly excluded from exercising myself on men, as I have been from devils, a whole species is lost; nay, I can never expect to appear upon the stage: if thou wilt quite ruin him by justice, and create another world and another man, if he stand thy bounty will be eminent, yet there is no room for mercy to act unless by the commission of sin he exposeth himself to misery; and if sin enter into another world, I have little hopes to be heard then if I am rejected now. Worlds will be perpetually created by goodness, wisdom, and power: sin entering into these worlds, will be perpetually punished by justice; and mercy, which is a perfection of thy nature, must lie wrapt up in eternal darkness. Take occasion now therefore to expose me to the knowledge of

thy creatures, since without misery mercy can never set foot into the world."

Mercy pleads, if man be ruined, the creation is in vain; justice pleads, if man be not sentenced the law is in vain; truth supports justice, and grace abets mercy. What shall be done in this seeming contradiction? Mercy is not manifested if man be not pardoned; justice will complain if man be not punished; therefore, an *expedient is found* out by the wisdom of God *to answer these demands*, and adjust the differences between them. The wisdom of God anwers, I will satisfy your pleas. The pleas of justice shall be satisfied in punishing, and the pleas of mercy shall be received in pardoning. Justice shall not complain for want of punishment, nor mercy for want of compassion. I will have an infinite sacrifice to content justice; and the virtue and fruit of that sacrifice shall delight mercy. Here shall justice have punishment to accept, and mercy shall have pardon to bestow. The rights of both are preserved, and the demands of both amicably accorded in punishment and pardon, by transferring the punishment of our crimes upon a surety, exacting a recompence from his blood by justice, and conferring life and salvation upon us by mercy without the expence of one drop of our own. Thus is justice satisfied in its severities, and mercy in its indulgences. The riches of grace are entwined with the terrors of wrath. The glories of mercy are wound about the flaming sword of justice, and the sword of justice protects and secures the glories of mercy. Thus is God righteous without being cruel, and merciful without being unjust; his righteousness inviolable, and the world recoverable. Thus is resplendent mercy brought forth in the midst of all the wrath threatened to the offender.

Thus is the admirable temperament found out by the wisdom of God. His justice is honoured in the sufferings of man's surety; and his mercy is honoured in the application of the propitiation to the offender. *Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness*

for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God, Rom. 3. 24, 25. Had we in our persons been sacrifices to justice, mercy had for ever been unknown; had we been solely fostered by mercy, justice had for ever been secluded; had we, being guilty, been absolved, mercy might have rejoiced, and justice might have complained; had we been solely punished, justice would have triumphed, and mercy grieved. But by this medium of redemption, neither hath ground of complaint: justice hath nothing to charge, when the punishment is inflicted; mercy hath whereof to boast when the surety is accepted. The debt of the sinner is transferred upon the surety that the merit of the surety may be conferred upon the sinner; so that God now deals with our sins in a way of consuming justice, and with our persons in a way of relieving mercy. It is highly better, and more glorious than if the claim of one had been granted with the exclusion of the demand of the other: it had then been either an unrighteous mercy or a merciless justice: it is now a righteous mercy and a merciful justice.

2. The wisdom of God appears in the *subject* or *person* wherein these were accorded; the *second person* in the blessed Trinity. There was a congruity in the Son's undertaking and effecting it rather than any other person, according to the order of the persons, and the several functions of the persons, as represented in scripture. The Father, after creation, is the law-giver, and presents man with the image of his own holiness and the way to his creatures happiness: but after the fall, man was too impotent to perform the law, and too polluted to enjoy felicity. Redemption was then necessary, not that it was necessary for God to redeem man, but it was necessary for man's happiness that he should be recovered. To this the second person is appointed, that by communion with him man might derive happiness, and be brought again to God. But since man was blind in his understanding, and an enemy in his will to God, there must be the exerting of a virtue to enlighten his mind, and bend his will to understand and accept of this redemp-

tion: and this work is assigned to the *third person*, the Holy Ghost.

It was not congruous that *the Father* should assume human nature, and suffer in it for the redemption of man. He was first in order, he was the law-giver, and therefore to be the judge. As law-giver, it was not convenient he should stand in the stead of the law-breaker; and as a judge, it was as little convenient he should be reputed a malefactor: that he who had made a law against sin, denounced a penalty upon the commission of sin, and whose part it was actually to punish the sinner, should become sin for the wilful transgress or of his law. He being the rector, how could he be an advocate and intercessor to himself? how could he be the judge and the sacrifice? A judge and yet a mediator to himself? If he had been the sacrifice, there must be some person to examine the validity of it, and pronounce the sentence of acceptance. Was it agreeable that the Son should sit upon a throne of judgment, and the Father stand at the bar, and be responsible to the Son? That the Son should be in the place of a governor, and the Father in the place of the criminal? That the Father should be *bruised* by the Son, as the Son was by the Father? that the Son should *awaken a sword* against the Father, as the Father did against the Son? that the Father should be sent by the Son as the Son was by the Father? the order of the persons in the blessed Trinity had been inverted and disturbed. Had the Father been sent he had not been first in order; the sender is before the person sent: as the Father begets, and the Son is begotten, *John* 1. 14, so the Father sends and the Son is sent. He whose order is to send, cannot properly send himself.

Nor was it congruous that *the Spirit* should be sent upon this affair. If the Holy Ghost had been sent to redeem us, and the Son to apply that redemption to us, the order of the persons had also been inverted. The Spirit then, who was third in order, had been second in operation. The Son would then have received of the Spirit, as the Spirit doth now of Christ. As the Spirit proceed-

ed from the Father and the Son, so the proper function and operation of it, was in order after the operations of the Father and the Son; had the Spirit been sent to redeem us, and the Son sent by the Father and the Spirit to apply that redemption to us; the Son in his acts had proceeded from the Father and the Spirit; the Spirit, as sender, had been in order before the Son; whereas the Spirit is called *the Spirit of Christ*, as sent by Christ from the Father. But as the order of the works, so the order of the persons is preserved in their several operations.

Creation, and a law to govern the creature, precedes redemption. Nothing, or that which hath no being, is not capable of a redeemed being. Redemption supposes the existence and the misery of a person redeemed. As creation precedes redemption, so redemption precedes the application of it. As redemption supposes the being of the creature, so the application of redemption supposes the efficacy of redemption. According to the order of these works is the operations of the three persons. *Creation* belongs to the Father, the first person. *Redemption*, the second work, is the function of the Son, the second person. *Application*, the third work, is the office of the Holy Ghost, the third person. * The Father orders it, the Son acts it, the Holy Ghost applies it. He purifies our souls to understand, believe, and love these mysteries. He forms Christ in the soul, as he did the body of Christ in the Virgin. As the Spirit of God *moved upon the waters*, to garnish and adorn the world, after the matter of it was formed, so he moves upon the heart, and draws the lineaments of the new creation in the soul.

The Son pays the price that was due from us to God, and the Spirit is the earnest of the promises of life and glory purchased by the merit of that death. It is to be observed, that the Father, under the dispensation of the law, proposed the commands, with the promises and threatenings, to the understandings of men; and Christ, under the dispensation of grace, when he was upon the

* Amyrant. Moral. Tom. 5. p. 478, 479, 480.

earth, proposed the gospel as the means of salvation, exhorted to faith as the condition of salvation; but it was neither the function of the one or the other, to display such an efficacy in the understanding and will, to make men believe and obey, and therefore there were such few conversions in the time of Christ, by his miracles; but this work was reserved for the fuller and brighter appearance of the Spirit, whose office it was to convince the world of the necessity of a Redeemer, because of their lost condition; of the person of the Redeemer, the Son of God; of the sufficiency and efficacy of redemption, because of his righteousness and acceptation by the Father. The wisdom of God is seen in preparing and presenting the objects, and then in making impression of them upon the subjects he intends. And thus is the order of the three persons preserved.

2. The *second person* had the *greatest congruity* to this work. He by whom God created the world, was most conveniently employed in restoring the defaced world: who more fit to recover it from its lapsed state, than he that had erected it in its primitive state? *He was the light of men* in creation, and therefore it was most reasonable he should be the light of men in redemption. Who fitter to reform the divine image, than he that first formed it? Who fitter to speak for us to God, than he who was *the Word?* Who could better intercede with the Father, than he who was the only begotten and beloved Son? Who so fit to redeem the forfeited inheritance as the *heir of all things?* Who fitter to prevail for us to have the right of children, than he that possessed it by nature? We fell from being the sons of God, and who fitter to introduce us into an adopted state than the Son of God? Herein was an expression of the richer grace, because the first sin was immediately against the wisdom of God, by an ambitious affectation of a wisdom equal to God; that that person, who was the *wisdom of God*, should be made a sacrifice for the expiation of the sin against wisdom.

3. The wisdom of God is seen *in the two natures of Christ*, whereby this redemption was accomplished. The

union of the two natures was the foundation of the union of God, and the fallen creature.

1. The union itself is *admirable; the Word is made flesh*; One *equal with God in the form of a servant*. When the apostle speaks of *God manifested in the flesh*, he speaks the *wisdom of God in a mystery*, 1 *Tim.* 3. 16. That which is incomprehensible to the angels, which they never imagined before it was revealed, which perhaps they never knew till they beheld it. Under the law the figures of the cherubim were placed in the sanctuary with their *faces looking towards the propitiatory*, in a perpetual posture of contemplation and admiration, *Exod.* 37. 9, to which the apostle alludes, 1 *Pet.* 1. 12. Mysterious is the wisdom of God to unite finite and infinite, almightiness and weakness, immortality and mortality, immutability with a creature subject to change; to have a nature from eternity, and yet a nature subject to the revolutions of time; a nature to make a law, and a nature to be subjected to the law; to be *God blessed for ever*, in the bosom of his Father, and an infant exposed to calamities from the womb of his mother: terms seeming most distant from union, most incapable of conjunction, to shake hands together, to be most intimately conjoined; glory and vileness, fulness and emptiness, heaven and earth; the creature with the Creator; he that made all things, in one person with a nature that is made; Immanuel, God and man in one; that which is most spiritual to partake of that which is carnal flesh and blood; one with the Father in his Godhead, one with us in his manhood; the Godhead to be in him in the fullest perfection, and the manhood in the greatest purity; the creature one with the Creator, and the Creator one with the creature. Thus is the incomprehensible wisdom of God declared in the *word being made flesh*.

2. This union is admirable in the *manner* of it. A union of two natures, yet no natural union. It transcends all the unions visible among creatures;* it is not like the union of stones in a building, or of two pieces of tim-

* Savana triump. crucis Lib. 3. cap. 7. p. 211.

ber fastened together, which touch one another only in their superficies and outside, without any intimacy with one another. By such a kind of union, God would not be man; the word could not so be made flesh. Nor is it the union of parts to the whole, as the members and the body; the members are parts, the body is the whole; for the whole results from the parts, and depends upon the parts; but Christ being God, is independent upon any thing. The parts are in order of nature before the whole, but nothing can be in order of nature before God. Nor is it as the union of two liquors, as when wine and water are mixed together; for they are so incorporated, as not to be distinguished from one another; no man can tell which particle is wine, and which is water. But the properties of the divine nature are distinguishable from the properties of the human. Nor is it as the union of the soul and body, so as that the Deity is the form of the humanity, as the soul is the form of the body; for as the soul is but a part of the man, so the divinity would be then but a part of the humanity; and as a form, or the soul, is in a state of imperfection, without that which it is to inform; so the divinity of Christ would have been imperfect, till it had assumed the humanity. And so the perfection of an eternal Deity would have depended on a creature of time.

This union of two natures in Christ is incomprehensible; and it is a mystery we cannot reach, how the divine nature, which is the same with that of the Father and the Holy Ghost, should be united to the human nature; without its being said, that the Father and the Holy Ghost were united to the flesh; but the scriptures do not encourage any such notion; they speak only of the Word, the person of the Word being made flesh. And in his being made flesh, distinguish him from the Father, as *the only begotten of the Father*, *John* 1. 14. The person of the Son was the term of this union.

1. This union does not confound *the properties of the Deity, and those of the humanity.* They remain distinct and entire in each other. The Deity is not changed into flesh, nor the flesh transformed into God: they are dis-

tinct and yet united: they are conjoined, and yet unmixed: the dues of either nature are preserved. It is impossible that the majesty of the divinity can receive any alteration: it is as impossible that the meanness of the humanity can receive the impressions of the Deity, so as to be changed into it; and a creature be metamorphosed into the Creator, and temporary flesh become eternal, and finite mount up into infinity: as the soul and body are united, and make one person; yet the soul is not changed into the perfections of the body, nor the body into the perfections of the soul. There is a change made in the humanity by being advanced to a more excellent union, but not in the Deity; as a change is made in the air, when it is enlightened by the sun, not in the sun, which communicates that brightness to the air. Athanasius makes the burning bush to be a type of Christ's incarnation, *Exod.* 3. 2. The fire signifying the divine nature, and the bush the human. The bush is a branch springing up from the earth, and the fire descends from heaven; as the bush was united to the fire, yet was not hurt by the flame, nor converted into fire, there remained a difference between the bush and the fire, yet the properties of the fire shined in the bush, so that the whole bush seemed to be on fire. So in the incarnation of Christ, the human nature is not swallowed up by the divine, nor changed into it, nor confounded with it; but so united, that the properties of both remain firm, two are so become one that they remain two still: one person in two natures, containing the glorious perfections of the divine, and the weaknesses of the human.

2. The divine nature is united to *every part of the humanity.* The whole divinity to the whole humanity; so that there is no part but may be said to be the member of God, as well as the blood is said to be the *blood of God, Acts* 20. 28. By the same reason it may be said, the hand of God, the eye of God, the arm of God. As God is infinitely present every where, so as to be excluded from no place; so is the Deity hypostatically every where in the humanity, not excluded from any part of it; as the light of the sun in every part of the air; as

a sparkling splendour in every part of the diamond. —Therefore it is concluded by all that acknowledge the Deity of Christ, that when his soul was separated from the body, the Deity remained united both to soul and body, as light does in every part of a broken chrystal.

3. The divine nature and the humanity are therefore *perpetually united*, *Col.* 2. 9. The *fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily.* It *dwells* in him, not lodges in him as a traveller in an inn, it resides in him as a fixed habitation. As God describes the perpetuity of his presence in the ark by his habitation or dwelling in it, *Exod.* 29. 44, so doth the apostle the inseparable duration of the Deity in the humanity, and the indissoluble union of the humanity with the Deity. It was united on earth, it remains united in heaven. It was not an image or an apparition, as the tongues wherein the spirit came upon the apostles, were a temporary representation, not a thing united perpetually to the person of the Holy Ghost.

4. It was a *personal union.* It was not an union of persons, though it was a personal union; so Davenant expounds, *Col.* 2. 9, Christ did not take the person of man, but the nature of man into subsistence with himself. The body and soul of Christ were not united in themselves, and no subsistence in themselves, till they were united to the person of the Son of God. If the person of a man were united to him, the human nature would have been the nature of the person so united to him, and not the nature of the Son of God, *Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham, Heb.* 2. 14, 16. He took flesh and blood to be his own nature, perpetually to subsist in the person of the Λόγος, which must be by a personal union, or no way: the Deity united to the humanity, and both natures to be one person. This is the mysterious and manifold wisdom of God.

3. The *end* of this union.

1. He was hereby fitted to be *Mediator*. He hath something like to man, and something like to God. If he were in all things only like to man, he would be at a distance from God: if he were in all things only like to God, he would be at a distance from man. He is a true Mediator between mortal sinners, and the immortal righteous One. He was near to us by the infirmities of our nature, and near to God by the perfections of the divine; as near to God in his nature, as to us in ours; as near to us in our nature as he is to God in the divine. Nothing that belongs to the Deity, but he possesses; nothing that belongs to the human nature, but he is clothed with.

He had both the nature, which had offended, and that nature which was offended; a nature to please God, and a nature to pleasure us: a nature whereby he experimentally knew the excellency of God, which was injured, and understood the glory due to him, and consequently the greatness of the offence, which was to be measured by the dignity of his person: and a nature whereby he might be sensible of the miseries contracted by, and endure the calamities due to the offender, that he might both have compassion on him, and make due satisfaction for him. * He had *two distinct natures*, capable of the affections and sentiments of the two persons he was to accord; he was a just Judge of the rights of the one, and the demerit of the other. He could not have this full and perfect understanding, if he did not possess the perfections of the one, and the qualities of the other; the one fitted him for *things pertaining to God*, *Heb.* 5. 1, and the other furnished him with a sense of the infirmities of man, *Heb.* 4. 15.

2. He was hereby fitted for the working out *the happiness of man.* A divine nature to communicate to man, and a human nature to carry up to God.

1. He had a nature whereby to *suffer for us*, and a nature whereby to be *meritorious in those sufferings.* A

* Gomb. de relig. p. 42.

nature to make him capable to bear the penalty, and a nature to make his sufferings sufficient for all that embraced him. A nature capable to be exposed to the flames of divine wrath, and another nature incapable to be crushed by the weight, or consumed by the heat of it: a human nature to suffer, and stand a sacrifice in the stead of man; a divine nature to sanctify these sufferings, and render them a sweet savour to God, and thereby atone his wrath: the one to bear the stroke due to us, and the other to add merit to his sufferings for us. Had he not been man, he could not have filled our place in suffering; and could he otherwise have suffered, his sufferings had not been applicable to us; and had he not been God, his sufferings had not been meritoriously and fruitfully applicable. Had not his blood been the blood of God, it had been of as little advantage as the blood of an ordinary man, or the blood of the *legal sacrifices.* Nothing less than God, could have satisfied God for the injury done by man. Nothing less than God, could have countervailed the torments due to the offending creature: nothing less than God, could have rescued us out of the hands of the jailor, too powerful for us.

2. He had therefore a nature to be *compassionate to us,* and *victorious for us.* A nature sensibly to compassionate us, and another nature to render those compassions effectual for our relief; he had the compassions of our nature to pity us, and the patience of the divine nature to bear with us. He hath the affections of a man to us, and the power of a God for us: a nature to discern Satan for us, and another nature to be sensible of his working in us, and against us. If he had been only God, he would not have had an experimental sense of our misery; and if he had been only man, he could not have vanquished our enemies: had he been only God, he could not have died; and had he been only man, he could not have conquered death.

3. A nature *efficaciously to instruct us.* As man, he was to instruct us sensibly; as God, he was to instruct us infallibly. A nature whereby he might converse with us, and a nature whereby he might influence us in those

converses. A human mouth to minister instructions to man, and a divine power to imprint it with efficacy.

4. A nature to be a *pattern to us.* A pattern of grace as man, as Adam was to have been to his posterity. *A divine nature shining in the human, the image of the invisible God in the glass of our flesh, that he might be a perfect copy for our imitation, *The image of the invisible God, and the first-born of every creature, Col.* 1. 15, in conjunction. The virtues of Deity are sweetened and tempered by union with humanity, as the beams of the sun are by shining through a coloured glass, which condescends more to the weakness of our eye. Thus the perfections of the invisible God, breaking through the first-born of every creature, glittering in Christ's created state, became more sensible for contemplation by our mind, and more imitable for conformity in our practice.

5. A nature to be *a ground of confidence* in our approach to God. A nature wherein we may behold him, and wherein we may approach him. A nature for our comfort, and a nature for our confidence. Had he been only man, he had been too feeble to assure us; and had he been only God, he had been too high to attract us. But now we are allured by his human nature, and assured by his divine, in our drawing near to heaven. Communion with God was desired by us, but our guilt stifled our hopes, and the infinite excellency of the divine nature would have damped our hopes of succeeding; but since these two natures, so far distant, are united, we have ground of hope, nay, an earnest that the Creator and believing creature shall meet and converse together. And since our sins are expiated by the death of the human nature in conjunction with the divine, our guilt, upon believing, shall not hinder us from this comfortable approach. Had he been only man, he could not have assured us an approach to God; had he been only God, his justice would not have admitted us to approach to him; he had been too terrible for guilty persons, and too holy for polluted persons to come near to him; but by being

* Amyrant Moral. tom. 5. p. 468, 469.

made man, his justice is tempered, and by his being God and man, his mercy is ensured. He had a human nature as one with us, that we might be related to God as one with him.

6. A nature to derive *all good to us.* Had he not been man, we had had no share or part in him; a satisfaction by him had not been imputed to us. If he were not God, he could not communicate to us divine graces and eternal happiness; he could not have had power to convey so great a good to us, had he been only man; and he could not have done it, according to the rule of inflexible righteousness, had he been only God. As man, he is the way of conveyance; as God, he is the spring of conveyance. From this grace of union, and the grace of unction, we find *rivers of waters flowing, to make glad the city of God.* Believers are his branches, and draw sap from him as he is their root in his human nature, and have an endless duration of it from his divine. Had he not been man, he had not been in a state to obey the law; had he not been God as well as man, his obedience could not have been valuable to be imputed to us. How should this mystery be studied by us, which would afford us both admiration and content? Admiration in the incomprehensibleness of it; contentment in the fitness of the Mediator. By this wisdom of God we receive the props of our faith, and the fruits of joy and peace. Wisdom consists in chusing fit means, and conducting them in such a method, as may reach with good success the variety of marks which are aimed at. Thus hath the wisdom of God set forth a Mediator suited to our wants, fitted for our supplies, and ordered so the whole affair by the union of these two natures in the person of the Redeemer, that there could be no disappointment, by all the bustle hell and hellish instruments could raise against it.

4. The wisdom of God is seen in this way of redemption, *in vindicating the honour and righteousness of the law,* both as to precept and penalty. The first and irreversible design of the law was obedience. The penalty of the law had only entrance upon transgression. Obedience was the design, and the penalty was added to en-

force the observance of the precept; *Thou shalt not eat;* there is the precept: *In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt die, Gen.* 2. 17; there is the penalty. Obedience was our debt to the law, as creatures; punishment was due from the law to us, as sinners. We were bound to endure the penalty for our first transgression, but the penalty did not cancel the bond of future obedience. The penalty had not been incurred without transgressing the precept; yet the precept was not abrogated by enduring the penalty. Since man so soon revolted, and by his revolt fell under the threatening, the justice of the law had been honoured by man's sufferings, but the holiness and equity of the law had been honoured by man's obedience. The wisdom of God finds out a medium to satisfy both. The justice of the law is preserved in the execution of the penalty, and the holiness of the law is honoured in the observance of the precept. The life of our Saviour is a conformity to the precept, and his death to the penalty; the precepts are exactly performed, and the curse punctually executed, by a voluntary observing the one, and a voluntary undergoing the other. It is obeyed as if it had not been transgressed, and executed as if it had not been obeyed.

It became the wisdom, justice, and holiness of God, as the rector of the world, to exact it, *Heb.* 2. 10; and it became the holiness of the Mediator *to fulfil all the righteousness of the law, Rom.* 8. 3. *Matt.* 3. 15; and thus the honour of the law was vindicated in all the parts of it. The transgression of the law was condemned in the flesh of the Redeemer, and the righteousness of the law was fulfilled in his person. And both these acts of obedience, being counted as one righteousness, and imputed to the believing sinner, render him a subject to the law, both in its preceptive and minatory part. By Adam's sinful acting we were made sinners, and by Christ's righteous acting we are made righteous. *As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous, Rom.* 5. 10. The law was obeyed by him, that *the righteousness of it might be fulfilled in us, Rom.* 8. 4. It is not fulfilled in us, or in our ac-

tions, by inherency, but by imputation of that righteousness which was exactly fulfilled by another. As he died and rose again for us, so he lived for us. The commands of the law were as well observed for us, as the threatenings of the law were endured for us. This justification of a sinner, with the preservation of the holiness of the law in truth, in the inward parts, in sincerity of intention, as well as the conformity in action, is the wisdom of God, the gospel-wisdom which David desires to know; *Thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom;* or as some render it, *the hidden things of wisdom. Psa.* 51. 6. Not an inherent wisdom in the acknowledgements of his sin, which he had confessed before; but the wisdom of God in providing a remedy, so as to keep up the holiness of the law in the observance of it in truth, and the averting the judgment due to the sinner. In and by this way, methodised by the wisdom of God, all doubts and troubles are discharged. Naturally if we take a view of the law to behold its holiness and justice, and then of our hearts, to see the contrariety in them to the command, and the pollution repugnant to its holiness; and after this cast our eyes upward, and behold a flaming sword, edged with curses and wrath; is there any matter, but that of terror, afforded by any of these? But when we behold, in the life of Christ, a conformity to the mandatory part of the law, and in the cross of Christ, a sustaining the minatory part of the law; this wisdom of God gives a well-grounded and rational dismissal to all the horrors than can seize upon us.

5. The wisdom of God in redemption is visible in manifesting two contrary affections at *the same time*, and *in one act*. The greatest hatred of sin, and the greatest love to the sinner. In this way he punishes the sin without ruining the sinner, and repairs the ruins of the sinner, without indulging the sin. Here is eternal love and eternal hatred; condemning the sin to what it merited, and advancing the sinner to what he could not expect. Herein is the choicest love, and the deepest hatred manifest. An implacableness against the sin, and a placableness to the sinner. His hatred of sin hath been discovered in

other ways, in punishing Satan without remedy; sentencing man to an expulsion from Paradise, though seduced by another; in cursing the serpent, an irrational creature, though but a misguided instrument. The whole tenor of his threatenings declare his loathing of sin, and his judgments in the world, and the horrible expectations of terrified consciences confirm it. But what are all these testimonies to the highest evidence that can possibly be given in the sheathing the sword of his wrath in the heart of his Son? If a father should order his son to take a mean garb below his dignity, order him to be dragged to prison, seem to throw off all affection of a father for the severity of a judge, condemn his son to a horrible death, be a spectator of his bleeding condition, withhold his hand from assuaging his misery, regard it rather with joy than sorrow, give him a bitter cup to drink, and stand by to see him drink it off to the very dregs, and flash frowns in his face all the while; and this not for any fault of his own, but the rebellion of some subjects he undertook for, and that the offenders might have a pardon sealed by the blood of the son, the sufferer; all this would evidence his detestation of the rebellion, and his affection to the rebels; his hatred to their crime, and his love to their welfare. This did God, *he delivered Christ up for our offences, Rom.* 8. 32. *The Father gave him the cup, John* 18. 18. The Lord *bruised him with pleasure, Isa.* 53. 10. and that for sin: he transferred upon the shoulders of his Son the pain we had merited, that the criminal might be restored to the place he had forfeited. He hates the sin so, as to condemn it for ever, and wrap it up in the curse he had threatened; and loves the sinner believing and repenting, so as to mount him to an expectation of happiness exceeding the first state, both in glory and perpetuity. Instead of an earthly Paradise, he lays the foundation of an heavenly mansion, brings forth a weight of glory from a weight of misery, separates the comfortable light of the sun from the scorching heat we had deserved at his hands. Thus hath God's hatred of sin been manifested. He is at an eternal distance with sin, yet nearer in alliance with the sinner

than he was before the revolt: as if man's miserable fall had endeared him to the judge. This is the wisdom and prudence of *grace, wherein God hath abounded, Eph.* 1. 9. A wisdom combining the happy restoration of the broken amity, with an everlasting curse upon that which made the breach, both upon sin the cause, and upon Satan the seducer to it. Thus are hatred and love in their highest glory manifested together: hatred to sin in the death of Christ, more than if the torments of hell had been undergone by the sinner; and love to the sinner, more than if he had, by an absolute and simple bounty, bestowed upon him the possession of heaven; because the gift of his Son, for such an end, is a greater token of his boundless affections, than reinstating man in Paradise. Thus is the wisdom of God seen in redemption; consuming the sin, and recovering the sinner.

6. The wisdom of God is evident in overturning Satan's empire, by *the nature he had vanquished,* and by ways quite contrary to what that malicious spirit could imagine. Satan indeed read his own doom in the first promise, and found his ruin resolved upon, by the means of the *seed of the woman,* but by what seed, was not so easily known to him.* And the methods whereby it was to be brought about, was a mystery kept secret from him, since it was not discovered to the obedient angels. He might know, from *Isa.* 53, that the Redeemer was assured to divide the spoil with the strong, rescue a part of the lost creation out of his hands; and that this was to be effected by making his soul an offering for sin: but could he imagine which way his soul was to be made such an offering? He shrewdly suspected Christ just after his inauguration into his office by baptism, to be the Son of God. But did he ever dream that the Messiah, by dying as a reputed malefactor, should be a sacrifice for the expiation of the sin he had introduced by his subtlety? Did he ever imagine a cross should dispossess him of his crown,

* And indeed the Heathen oracles, managed by the devils, declared that they were not long to hold their sceptre in the world, but the Hebrew child should vanquish them.

and that dying groans should wrest the victory out of his hands?

He was conquered by that nature he had cast headlong into ruin: a woman, by his subtlety, was the occasion of our death; and woman, by the conduct of the only wise God, brings forth the author of our life, and the conqueror of our enemies. The flesh of the old Adam had infected us, and the flesh of the new Adam cures us. *By man came death; by man also came the resurrection from the dead,* 1 *Cor.* 15. 21. We are killed by the old Adam and raised by the new. As among the Israelites, a fiery serpent gave the wound, and a brazen serpent administers the cure. The nature that was deceived bruises the deceiver, and razes up the foundations of his kingdom. Satan is defeated by the counsels he took to secure his possession, and loses the victory by the same means whereby he thought to preserve it.

His tempting the Jews to the sin of crucifying the Son of God, had a contrary success to his tempting Adam to eat of the tree. The first death he brought upon Adam ruined us, and the death he brought by his instruments upon the second Adam, restored us. By a tree, if one may so say, he had triumphed over the world, and by the fruit of a tree, one hanging upon a tree, he is discharged of his power over us. *Through death he destroyed him that had the power of death, Heb.* 2. 14. And thus the devil ruins his own kingdom while he thinks to confirm and enlarge it; and is defeated by his own policy, whereby he thought to continue the world under his chains; and deprive the Creator of the world of his purposed honour. What deeper counsel could he resolve upon for his own security, than to be instrumental in the death of him who was God, the terror of Satan himself, and to bring the Redeemer of the world to expire with disgrace in the sight of a multitude of men? Thus did the wisdom of God shine forth in restoring us, by methods seemingly repugnant to the end he aimed at, and above the suspicion of a subtle devil, whom he intended to baffle.

Could he imagine we should be healed by stripes, quick-

ened by death, purified by blood, crowned by a cross, advanced to the highest honour by the lowest humility, comforted by sorrows, glorified by disgrace, absolved by condemnation, and made rich by poverty? That the sweetest honey should at once spring out of a dead lion, the lion of the tribe of Judah, and out of the bosom of the living God? How wonderful is this wisdom of God! That the seed of the woman, born of a mean virgin, brought forth in a stable, spending his days in affliction, misery, and poverty, without any pomp and splendour, passing some time in a carpenter's shop, and afterwards exposed to a horrible and disgraceful death, should by this way pull down the gates of hell, subvert the kingdom of the devil, and be the hammer to break in pieces that power which he had so long exercised over the world! Thus became he the author of our life, by being bound for a while in the chains of death, and arrived to sovereignty over the most malicious powers by being a prisoner for us, and the anvil of their rage and fury.

7. The wisdom of God appears in giving us this way *the surest ground of comfort* and *the strongest incentive to obedience.* The rebel is reconciled, and the rebellion shamed; God is propitiated and the sinner sanctified by the same blood. What can more contribute to our comfort and confidence, than God's richest gift to us? What can more inflame our love to him than our recovery from death by the oblation of his Son to misery and death for us? It as much engages our duty as secures our happiness. It presents God glorious and gracious, and therefore every way fit to be trusted in regard of the interest of his own glory in it, and in regard of the effusions of his grace by it. It renders the creature obliged in the highest manner, and so awakens his industry to the strictest and noblest obedience. Nothing so effectual as a crucified Saviour to wean us from sin and stifle all motions of despair, a means, as to the justice signalized in it, to make man hate the sin which had ruined him; and a means, in the love expressed, to make him delight in that law he had violated, 2 *Cor.* 5. 14, 15. The love of Christ and

therefore the love of God expressed in it, constrains us no longer to live to ourselves.

1. It is a ground of the highest *comfort and confidence in God.* Since he hath given such an evidence of his impartial truth to his threatening for the honour of his justice, we need not question but he will be as punctual to his promise for the honour of his mercy. It is a ground of confidence in God, since he hath redeemed us in such a way as glorifies the steadiness of his veracity, as well as the severity of his justice; we may well trust him for the performance of his promise since we have experience of the execution of his threatening; his merciful truth will as much engage him to accomplish the one, as his just truth did to inflict the other. The goodness which shone forth in weaker rays in the creation, breaks out with stronger beams in redemption. And the mercy which before the appearance of Christ was manifested in small rivulets, diffuses itself like a boundless ocean. That God that was our Creator, is our Redeemeer, the *repairer of our breaches,* and the *restorer of our paths to dwell in:* and the plenteous redemption from all iniquity, manifested in the incarnation and passion of the Son of God, is much more a ground of hope in the Lord, than it was in the past ages, when it could not be said, *the Lord hath, but the Lord shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities. Psal.* 130. 8. It is a full warrant to cast ourselves into his arms.

2. An incentive to *obedience.* The commands of the gospel *require* the obedience of the creature. There is not one precept in the gospel which interferes with any rule in the law, but strengthens it, and represents it in its true exactness: the heat to scorch us is allayed, but the light to direct us is not extinguished. Not the least allowance to any sin is granted; not the least affection to any sin is indulged. The law is tempered by the gospel, but not annulled by it; it enacts that none but those that are sanctified shall be glorified; that there must be grace here, if we expect glory hereafter; that we must not presume to expect admittance to the vision of God's face, unless our souls be clothed with a robe of *holiness, Heb.* 12. 14, it requires obedience to the whole

law in our intention and purpose, and endeavours to observe it in our actions: it promotes the honour of God, and ordains an universal charity among men; it reveals the whole counsel of God, and furnishes men with the holiest laws.

It presents to us *the exactest pattern* for our obedience. The redeeming person is not only a propitiation for the sin but a pattern to the sinner, 1 *Pet.* 2. 21. The conscience of man, after the fall of Adam, approved of the reason of the law, but by the corruption of nature, man had no strength to perform the law. The possibility of keeping the law by human nature is evidenced by the appearance and life of the Redeemer, and an assurance given that it shall be advanced to such a state as to be able to observe it: we aspire to it in this life, and have hopes to attain it in a future: and while we are here, the author of our redemption is the copy for our imitation. The pattern to imitate is greater than the law to be ruled by. What a lustre did his virtues cast about the world? How attractive are his graces? With what high examples for all duties hath he furnished us out of the copy of his life?

It presents us with the *strongest motives* to obedience. *The grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness, Tit.* 2. 11, 12. What chains bind faster and closer than love? here is love to our nature in his incarnation; love to us, though enemies, in his death and passion; encouragements to obedience by the proffers of pardon for former rebellions: by the disobedience of man God introduces his redeeming grace, and engages his creature to more ingenuous and excellent returns than his innocent state could oblige him to. In his created state he had goodness to move him, he hath the same goodness now to oblige him as a creature, and a greater love and mercy to oblige him as a repaired creature; and the terror of justice is taken off, which might envenom his heart as a criminal. In his revolted state he had misery to discourage him; in his redeemed state he hath love to attract him. Without such a way, black despair had seized upon the creature exposed to a remediless misery: and

God would have had no returns of love from the best of his earthly works; but if any sparks of ingenuity be left, they will be excited by the efficacy of this argument.

This willingness of God to receive returning sinners, is manifested in the highest degree; and the willingness of a sinner to return to him in duty hath the strongest engagements. He hath done as much to encourage our obedience as to illustrate his glory. We cannot conceive what could be done greater for the salvation of our souls, and consequently what could have been done more to enforce our obedience. We have a Redeemer, as man, to copy it to us, and as God to perfect us in it. It would make the heart of any to tremble to wound him that hath provided such means for healing our maladies, and to make grace a warrant for rebellion: motives capable to form rocks into a flexibleness. Thus is the wisdom of God seen in giving us a ground of the surest confidence, and furnishing us with incentives to the greatest obedience by the horrors of wrath, death, and sufferings of our Saviour.

8. The wisdom of God is apparent in *the condition he hath settled for the enjoying the fruits of redemption*, and this is faith, a wise and reasonable condition: and the concomitants of it.

It is a condition suited to *man's lapsed state and God's glory*. Innocence is not required here, that had been a condition impossible in its own nature after the fall: the rejecting of mercy is now only condemning where mercy is proposed: had the condition of perfection in works been required, it had rather been a condemnation than redemption. Works are not demanded whereby the creature might ascribe any thing to himself; but a condition which continues in man a sense of his apostacy, abates all aspiring pride, and makes the reward of grace not of debt: a condition whereby mercy is owned and the creature emptied; flesh silenced in the dust, and God set upon his throne of grace and authority; the creature brought to the lowest debasement, and divine glory raised to the highest pitch. The creature is brought to acknowledge mercy and seal to justice, to own the holiness of God in the hatred of sin, the justice of God in the

punishment of sin, and the mercy of God in the pardoning of sin, a condition that despoils nature of all its pretended excellency: beats down the glory of man at the foot of God, 1 *Cor.* 1. 29, 31. It subjects the reason and will of man to the wisdom and authority of God; it brings the creature to an unreserved submission and entire resignation. God is made the sovereign cause of all; the creature continued in his emptiness, and reduced to a greater dependance upon God than by creation, depending upon him for a constant influx for an entire happiness. A condition that renders God glorious in the creature, and the fallen creature happy in God: God glorious in his condescension to man, and man happy in his emptiness before God. Faith is made the condition of man's recovery, that the lofty looks of man might be humbled and the *haughtiness of man be bowed down*, *Isa.* 2. 11. That every towering imagination might be levelled, 2 *Cor.* 10. 5. Man must have all from without; he must not live upon himself, but upon another's allowance. He must stand to the provision of God, and be a perpetual suitor at his gates.

It is a condition *opposite to that which was the cause of the fall.* We fell from God by unbelief of the threatening, he recovers us by belief of the promise; by unbelief we laid the foundation of God's dishonour, by faith therefore God exalts the glory of his free grace. We lost ourselves by a desire of self-dependance, and our return is ordered by a way of self-emptiness. It is reasonable we should be restored in a way contrary to that whereby we fell: we sinned by a refusal of cleaving to God, it is a part of divine wisdom to restore us in a denial of our own righteousness and strength.* "Man having sinned by pride, the wisdom of God humbles him at the very root of the tree of knowledge, and makes him deny his own understanding, and submit to faith, or else, for ever to lose his desired felicity."

It is a condition suited to the *common sentiment and custom of the world.* There is more of belief than reason in the world. All instructors and masters in scien-

* Laud against Fisher. p. 5.

ces and arts, require first a belief in their disciples, and a resignation of their understandings and wills to them. And it is the wisdom of God to require that of man, which his own reason makes him submit to another which is his fellow creature. He therefore that quarrels with the condition of faith, must quarrel with all the world, since belief is the beginning of all knowledge;* yea, and most of the knowledge in the world may rather come under the title of belief, than of knowledge; for what we think we know this day, we may find from others such arguments as may stagger our knowledge, and may make us doubt of that we thought ourselves certain of before; nay sometimes we change our opinions ourselves, without any instructor; and see reason to entertain an opinion quite contrary to what we had before. And if we found a general judgment of others to vote against what we think we know, it would make us give the less credit to ourselves, and our own sentiments. All knowledge in the world, is only a belief depending upon the testimony or arguings of others; for indeed it may be said of all men as in Job, *We are but of yesterday, and know nothing*, *Job* 8. 9. Since therefore belief is so universal a thing in the world, the wisdom of God requires that of us which every man must count reasonable, or render himself utterly ignorant of any thing. It is a condition that is common to all religions. All religions are founded upon belief; unless men believed future things, they would not hope nor fear. A belief and resignation was required in all the idolatries in the world; so that God requires nothing but what an universal custom of the world gives its suffrage to the reasonableness of; indeed justifying faith is not suited to the sentiments of men; but that faith which must precede justifying, a belief of the doctrine, though not comprehended by reason, is common to the custom of the world.† It is no less madness not to submit our reason to faith, than not to regulate our fancies by reason.

This condition of faith and repentance *is suited to the consciences* of men. The law of nature teaches us, that

* Bradward, 28. † Janeway, p. 88

we are bound to believe every revelation from God, when it is made known to us; and not only to assent to it as true, but embrace it as good. This nature dictates, that we are as much obliged to believe God, because of his truth, as to love him, because of his goodness. Every man's reason tells him, he cannot obey a precept, nor depend upon a promise, unless he believes both the one and the other. No man's conscience, but will inform him upon hearing the revelation of God, concerning his excellent contrivance of redemption, and the way to enjoy it, that it is very reasonable he should strip off all affections to sin, lie down in sorrow, and bewail what he hath done amiss against so tender a God. Can you expect that any man that promises you a great honour or a rich donative, should demand less of you than to trust his word, bear affection to him, and return him kindness? Can any less be expected by a prince than obedience from a pardoned subject, and a redeemed captive? If you have injured any man in his body, estate, reputation, would you not count it a reasonable condition for the partaking of his clemency and forgiveness, to express a hearty sorrow for it, and a resolution not to fall into the like crime again? Such are the conditions of the gospel, suited to the conciences of men.

The wisdom of God appears, in that this condition *was only likely to attain the end.* There are but two common heads appointed by God, Adam and Christ; by one we are made *a living soul*, by the other *a quickening Spirit;* by the one we are made sinners, by the other we are made righteous. Adam fell as a head, and all his members, his whole issue and posterity, fell with him, because they proceeded from him by natural generation. But since the *second Adam* cannot be our head by natural generation, there must be some other way of ingrafting us in him, and uniting us to him as our head, which must be moral and spiritual; this cannot rationally be conceived to be by any other way than what is suitable to a reasonable creature, and therefore must be by an act of the will, consent and acceptance, and owning the terms settled for an admission to that union. And

this is that we properly call faith, and therefore called a *receiving of him, John* 1. 12.

Now this condition of enjoying the fruits of redemption could not be *a bare knowledge*; for that is but only an act of the understanding, and doth not in itself include the act of the will, and so would have united only one faculty to him, not the whole soul: but faith is an act both of the understanding and will too; and principally of the will, which presupposes an act of the understanding; for there cannot be a persuasion in the will, without a proposition from the understanding. The understanding must be convinced of the truth and goodness of a thing, before the will can be persuaded to make any motion towards it; and therefore all the promises, invitations, and proffers are suited to the understanding and will; to the understanding in regard of knowledge, to the will in regard of appetite; to the understanding as true, to the will as good; to the understanding as practical and influencing the will.

Nor could this condition of enjoying the fruits of redemption be an *entire* obedience. That, as was said before, would have made the creature have some matter of boasting, and this was not suitable to the condition he was sunk into by the fall. Besides, man's nature being corrupted, was rendered incapable to obey, and unable to have one thought of a due obedience. When man turned from God, and upon that was turned out of paradise, his return was impossible by any strength of his own: his nature was as much corrupted as his re-entrance into Paradise was prohibited. That covenant, whereby he stood in the garden, required a perfection of action and intention in the observance of all the commads of God; but his fall had destroyed his ability to recover happiness by the terms and condition of an intire obedience; yet man being governable by a law, and capable of happiness by a covenant; if God would restore him, and enter into covenant with him, we must suppose it to have some condition, as all covenants have. That condition could not be works, because man's nature was polluted. Indeed, had God reduced man's body to

the dust, and his soul to nothing, and framed another man, he might have governed him by a covenant of works; but that had not been the same man that had revolted, and upon his revolt was stained and disabled. But suppose God had by any transcendent grace, wholly purified him from the stain of his former transgression, and restored to him the strength and ability he had lost, might he not as easily have rebelled again? And so the condition would never have been accomplished, the covenant never have been performed, and happiness never have been enjoyed. There must be some other condition then in the covenant God would make for man's security.

Now *faith* is the most proper for receiving the promise of pardon of sin; belief of those promises is the first natural reflection that a malefactor can make upon a pardon offered him, an acceptance of it is the first consequent from that belief. Hence is faith entitled a *persuasion of*, and *embracing the promises. Heb.* 11. 13. and *a receiving the atonement, Rom.* 5. 11. Thus the wisdom of God is apparent in annexing such a condition to the covenant whereby man is restored, as answers the end of God for his glory, the state, conscience, and necessity of man, and had the greatest congruity to his recovery.

9. This wisdom of God is manifest *in the manner* of publishing and propagating this doctrine of redemption.

1. In the *gradual* discoveries of it. Should the sun glare in our eye in all its brightness on a sudden, after we have been in thick darkness, it would blind us, instead of comforting us; so great a work as this must have several digestions. God first reveals of what seed the redeeming person should be, *the seed of the woman, Gen.* 2. 15: then of what nation, *Gen.* 26. 4; then of what tribe, *Gen.* 49. 12, of the tribe of Judah; then of what family, the family of David; then what works he was to do, what sufferings to undergo. The first predictions of our Saviour were obscure. Adam could not well see the redemption in the promise, for the punishment of death which succeeded in the threatening; the promise

exercised his faith, and the obscurity and bodily death, his humility. The promise made to Abraham was clearer than the revelations made before, yet he could not tell how to reconcile his redemption with his exile. God supported his faith by the promise, and exercised his humility by making him a pilgrim, and keeping him in a perpetual dependance upon him in all his motions.

The declarations to Moses are brighter than those to Abraham. The delineations of Christ by David in the Psalms, more illustrious than the former. And all those exceeded by the revelations made to the prophet Isaiah, and the other prophets, according as the age approached, wherein the Redeemer was to enter into his office. God wrapped up this gospel in a multitude of types and ceremonies, fitted to the infant state of the church; *Gal.* 4. 3. An infant state is usually affected with sensible things; yet those ceremonies were fitted to that great end of the gospel, which he would bring forth in time to the world. And the wisdom of God in them would be amazing, if we could understand the analogy between every ceremony in the law and the thing signified by it. As it cannot but affect a diligent reader to observe that little account of them we have by the apostle Paul, in his epistles, and more largely in that to the Hebrews. As the political laws of the Jews flowed from the depth of the moral law, so did their ceremonial from the depth of evangelical counsels, and all of them had a special relation to the honour of God and the debasing the creature.

Though God formed the mass and matter of the world at the first creation at once, yet his wisdom took six days for the disposing and adorning it. The more illustrious truths of God are not to be comprehended on a sudden by the weakness of men: Christ did not declare all truths to his disciples in the time of his life, because they were not able to bear them, *ye cannot bear them now*, *John* 16. 12. Some were reserved for his resurrection, others for the coming of the Spirit; and the full discovery of all kept back for another world. This doctrine God figured

out in the law, oracled by the prophets, and unveiled by Christ and his apostles.

2. The wisdom of God appeared, in using all *proper means* to render the belief of it easy. With this design in view, the most *minute things* that were to be transacted, *were predicted in the ancient foregoing age*, long before the coming of the Redeemer: the vinegar and gall offered to him upon the cross, the parting his garments, the not breaking of his bones, the piercing his hands and feet, the betraying him, the slighting him by the multitude, all were exactly painted and represented in variety of figures. There was light enough to good men not to mistake him; and yet not so plain, as to hinder bad men from being serviceable to the counsels of God in the crucifying of him when he came.

The translation of the old testament from the private language of the Jews into the most public language of the world, greatly facilitated this purpose. That translation which we call *Septuagint*, from Hebrew into Greek, some years before the coming of Christ, that tongue being most diffused at that time, by reason of the Macedonian empire raised by Alexander, and the university of Athens, to which other nations resorted for learning and education: this was a preparation for the sons of *Japhet* to *dwell in the tents of Shem*. By this was the entertainment of the gospel facilitated: when they compared the prophecies of the old testament with the declarations of the new, and found things so long predicted before they were transacted in the public view.

Another means was, by *ordering concurrent testimonies as to matter of fact, so that the matter of fact was not deniable*. That there was such a person as Christ, that his miracles were stupendous, that his doctrine did not incline to sedition, that he affected not worldly applause, that he suffered at Jerusalem, was acknowledged by all: not a man among the greatest enemies of christians was found, that denied the matter of fact. And this great truth, that Christ is the Messiah and Redeemer, hath been, with universal consent, owned by all the professors

of christianity throughout the world: whatever bickerings there have been among them about some particular doctrines, they all concurred in that truth of Christ's being the Redeemer. The first publication of this doctrine was sealed by a thousand miracles, and so illustrious, that he was an utter stranger to the world that was ignorant of them.

3. In keeping up some *principles and opinions* in the world to facilitate the belief of this, or render men inexcusable for rejecting of it. The incarnation of the Son of God could not be so strange to the world, if we consider the general belief of the appearances * of their gods among them; that the epicureans, and others that denied any such appearances, were counted atheists †. And Pythagoras was esteemed to be one, not of the inferior genii and lunar dæmons, but one of the higher gods, who appeared in a human body, for the curing and rectifying mortal life. ‡ And himself tells Abaris the Scythian, that he was ἀνθρειπόμορφος, that he took the flesh of man, that men might not be astonished at him, and in a fright fly from his instructions. It was not therefore accounted an irrational thing among them, that God should be incarnate: but indeed the great stumbling-block was a *crucified* God. But had they known the holy and righteous nature of God, the malice of sin, the universal corruption of human nature, the first threatening, and the necessity of vindicating the honour of the law, and clearing the justice of God; the notion of his crucifixion would not have appeared so incredible, since they believed the possibility of an incarnation.

Another principle was that universal one of *sacrifices for expiation*, and rendering God propitious to man, and was practiced among all nations. I remember not any wherein this custom did not prevail; for it did even among those people where the Jews, as being no trading nation, had not any commerce; and also in America,

* Επιφάνειαι.

† Dionis. Halicar. Antiq. l. 2. p. 128.

‡ Iamblych. Vit. Pythag. l. 1. cap. 6. p. 44. & lib. 2. c. 19. p. 94.

found out in these latter ages. It was not a law of nature, no man can find any such thing written in his own heart, but tradition from Adam. Now that among the loss of so many other doctrines, that were handed down from Adam to his immediate posterity, as in particular that of the *seed of the woman*, which one would think a necessary appendix to that of sacrificing; this latter should be preserved as a fragment of an ancient tradition, seems to be an act of divine wisdom, to prepare men for the entertainment of the doctrine of the great sacrifice for the expiation of the sin of the world. And as the apostle forms his argument from the Jewish sacrifices in the epistle to the Hebrews, for the convincing them of the end of the death of Christ, so did the ancient fathers make use of this practice of the heathen, to convince them of the same doctrine.

4. The wisdom of God appeared in *the time and circumstances* of the first solemn publication of the gospel by the apostles at Jerusalem. The relation you may read in *Acts* 2, from verse 1, to the 12th. The Spirit was given to the apostles on the day of Pentecost; a time wherein there were multitudes of Jews from all nations, not only near, but remote, that heard the great things of God spoken in the several languages of those nations, where their habitations were fixed; and that by twelve illiterate men, that two or three hours before knew no language but that of their native country. It was the custom of the Jews, that dwelt among other nations at a distance from Jerusalem, to assemble together at Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost: and God pitched upon this season, that there might be witnesses of this miracle in many parts of the world: there were some of every nation under heaven, verse 5. That is, of that known part of the world, so saith the text. Fourteen different nations are mentioned; and proselytes as well as Jews by birth. They are called *devout* men, men of conscience, whose testimony would carry weight with it among their neighbours at their return, because of their reputation by their religious carriage. Again, this was not heard and seen by some of them at one time, and some at another,

by some one hour, by others the next successively, * but altogether in a solemn assembly, that the testimony of so many witnesses at a time, might be more valid, and the truth of the doctrine appear more illustrious and undeniable. And it must needs be astonishing to them, to hear that person magnified in so miraculous a manner, who had so lately been condemned by their countrymen as a malefactor.

Wisdom consists in the *timeing* of things. And in this circumstance does the wisdom of God appear, in furnishing the apostles with the Spirit at such a time, and bringing forth such a miracle as the the gift of tongues on a sudden, that every nation might hear in their own language, the wonders of redemption; and as witnesses at their return into their own countries, report it to others, that the credit they had in their several places might facilitate the belief and entertainment of the gospel, when the apostles, or others, should arrive to those several places appointed for them to preach the gospel in. Had this miracle been wrought in the presence only of the inhabitants of Judea, that understood only their own language, or one or two of the neighbouring tongues, it had been counted by them rather a madness than a miracle. Or had they understood all the tongues which they spoke, the news of it had spread no further than the limits of their own habitations, and had been confined within the narrow bounds of the land of Judea. But now it is carried to several remote nations, where any of those auditors then assembled had their residence.

As God chose the time of the *passover* for the death of Christ, that there might be the greatest number of the inhabitants of the country as witnesses of the matter of fact, the innocence and sufferings of Christ, so he chose the time of Pentecost for the first publishing the value and end of this blood to the world. Thus the evangelical law was given in a confluence of people from all parts and nations, because it was a *covenant with all nations;* and the variety of languages spoken by a company of

* Faucheur in loc. p. 294, 295.

poor Galileans, bred up at the lake of Tiberias, and in poor corners of Canaan, without the instructions of men for so great a skill, might well evidence to the hearers that God, that brought the confusion of languages first at Babel, did only work that cure of them, and combine all together at Jerusalem.

5. The wisdom of God is seen *in the instruments* he employed in the publishing the gospel. He did not employ philosophers, but fishermen; he used not acquired arts, but infused wisdom and courage. This *treasure* was put into, and preserved *in earthen vessels*, that the wisdom, as well as the *power of God*, might be magnified. The weaker the means are which attain the end, the greater is the skill of the conductor of them.

Wise princes choose men of most credit, interest, wisdom, and ability, to be ministers of their affairs and ambassadors to others. But what were these that God chose for so greak a work as the publishing a new doctrine to the world? What was their quality but mean? What was their authority, without interest? What was their ability, without eminent parts for so great a work, but what divine grace in a special manner endowed them with? Nay, what was their disposition to it? As dull and unweildy. Witness the frequent rebukes for their slow heartedness from their Master, when he conversed in the flesh with them. And one of the greatest of them, so fond of the Jewish ceremonies and Pharisaical principles, wherein he had been more than ordinarily principled, that he hated the Christian religion to extirpation, and the professors of it to death; by those ways which were out of the reach of human wisdom, and would be accounted the greatest absurdity to be practised by men that have any repute for discretion, did God advance his wisdom; *The foolishness of God is wiser than man*, 1 *Cor.* 1. 25. By this means it was indisputably evidenced to unbiassed minds, that the doctrine was divine. It could not rationally be imagined, that instruments destitute of all human advantages, should be able to vanquish the world, confound Judaism, overturn Heathenism, chase away the idols, strip them of their temples, alienate the

minds of men from their several religions, which had been rooted in them by education, and established by a long succession. It could not, I say, reasonably be imagined to be without a supernatural assistance, an heavenly and efficacious working. Whereas, had God taken a course agreeable to the prudence of man, and used those that had been furnished with learning, adorned with eloquence, and armed with human authority, the doctrines would have been thought to have been of a human invention, and to be some subtle contrivance for some unworthy and ambitious end. The nothingness and weakness of the instruments manifest them to be conducted by a divine power, and declare the doctrine itself to be from heaven.

When we see such feeble instruments proclaiming a doctrine repugnant to flesh and blood, sounding forth a crucified Christ to be believed in and trusted on, and declaiming against the religion and worship, under which the Roman empire had long flourished; exhorting them to the contempt of the world, preparation for afflictions, denying themselves, and their own honours, by the hopes of an unseen reward, things so repugnant to flesh and blood; and these instruments concurring in the same story, with an admirable harmony in all parts, and sealing this doctrine with their blood; can we upon all this ascribe this doctrine to a human contrivance, or fix any lower author of it than the wisdom of heaven? It is the wisdom of God that carries on his own designs in methods most suitable to his own greatness, and different from the customs and modes of men, that less of humanity and more of divinity might appear.

6. The wisdom of God appears in the *ways and manner*, as well as in the instruments of its propagation. By ways seemingly contrary. You know how God had sent the Jews into captivity in Babylon, and though he struck off their chains, and restored them to their country, yet many of them had no mind to leave a country wherein they had been born and bred. The distance from the place of the original of their ancestors, and their affection to the country wherein they were born, might have occasioned their em-

bracing the idolatrous worship of the place. Afterwards the persecutions of Antiochus scattered many of the Jews for their security into other nations; yet a great part, and perhaps the greatest, preserved their religion, and by that were obliged to come every year to Jerusalem to offer, and so were present at the effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and were witnesses of the miraculous effects of it. Had they not been dispersed by persecution, had they not resided in several countries and been acquainted with their languages, the gospel had not so easily been diffused into several countries of the world. The first persecutions also raised against the church propagated the gospel; the scattering of the disciples inflamed their courage and dispersed the doctrine, *Acts* 8. 3, according to the prophecy of Daniel, *Many should run to and fro, and knowledge should be increased, Dan.* 12. 4. The flights and hurryings of men should enlarge the territories of the gospel. There was not a tribunal, but the primitive Christians were cited to; not a horrible punishment but was inflicted upon them. Treated they were as the dregs and offals of mankind, as the common enemies of the world; yet the flames of the martyrs brightened the doctrine, and the captivity of its professors made way for the throne of its empire. The imprisonment of the ark was the downfal of Dagon. Religion grew stronger by sufferings, and christianity taller by injuries. What can this be ascribed to, but the conduct of a wisdom superior to that of men and devils, defeating the methods of human and hellish policy; thereby making the *wisdom of this world foolishness with God?* 1 *Cor.* 3. 19.

PART VII.

INFERENCES FROM THE WISDOM OF GOD.

That Christ is God—The right and fitness of God to govern the world—The ground of his patience—Immutability of his decrees—Object of confidence—Of contemplation—Of reverence—Of invocation—The guilt of treating the wisdom of God with contempt—Defacing his workmanship—Slighting his laws—Introducing modes of worship differing from his own institutions—Neglect of his institutions—Prescribing to God—Impatience—Pride---Unbelief---The comfort to be derived from the consideration of God's infinite wisdom in all the trials of life.

Fifthly, THE inferences deducible from the wisdom of God.

I. If wisdom be an excellency of the divine nature; then, 1. Christ's *Deity* may hence be asserted. Wisdom is the emphatical title of Christ in scripture, *Prov.* 8. 12, 13, 31, where wisdom is brought in speaking as a distinct person; ascribing counsel, and understanding, and the knowledge of witty inventions to itself. He is called also the power of God, and the wisdom of God, 1 *Cor.* 1. 24. And the ancients generally understood that place, *In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, *Col.* 2. 3, as an assertion of the godhead of Christ, in regard of the infiniteness of his knowledge, referring wisdom to his knowledge of divine things; and knowledge to his understanding of all human things. But the natural sense

of the place seems to be this, that all wisdom and knowledge is displayed by Christ in the gospel; and the words ἐνα υ' ττῶ, refer either to Christ, or the mystery of God spoken of, ver. 2. But the Deity of Christ, in regard of infinite wisdom, may be deduced from his creation of things, and his government of things; both which are ascribed to him in scripture. The first ascribed to him, *All things were made by him*, *John* 1. 3; *Without him was not any thing made that was made*, ver. 27; the second, *The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son*, *John* 5. 22; and both are put together, *Col.* 2. 16, 17.

Now since he hath the government of the world, he hath the perfections necessary to so great a work. As the creation of the world, which is ascribed to him, requires an infinite power, so the government of the world requires an infinite wisdom. That he hath the knowledge of the hearts of men, was proved in handling the omniscience of God. That knowledge would be to little purpose without wisdom to order the motions of men's hearts, and conduct all the qualities and actions of creatures to such an end as is answerable to a wise government, we cannot think so great an employment can be without an ability necessary for it. The government of men and angels is a great part of the glory of God; and if God should intrust the greatest part of his glory in hands unfit for so great a trust, it would be an argument of weakness in God, as it is in men, to pitch upon unfit instruments for particular charges. Since God hath therefore committed to him his greatest glory, the conduct of all things for the highest end, he hath wisdom requisite for so great an end, which can be no less than infinite. If then Christ were a finite person, he would not be capable of an infinite communication; he could not be a subject wherein infinite wisdom could be lodged, for the terms finite and infinite are so distant that they cannot commence one another; finite can never be changed into infinite, no more than infinite can into finite.

2. Hence we may assert the *right and fitness* of God for the government of the world, as he is the wisest being. Among men, those who are excellent in judgment

are accounted fittest to preside over, and give orders to others; the wisest in a city are the most capable to govern a city; or at least, though ignorant men may bear the title, yet the advice of the soundest and most skilful heads should prevail in all public affairs. We see in nature that the eye guides the body, and the mind directs the eye.

* Power and wisdom are the two arms of authority. Wisdom knows the end, and directs the means; power executes the means designed for such an end. The more splendid and strong these are in any, the more authority results from thence, for the conduct of others that are of an inferior orb. Now God being infinitely excellent in both, his ability and right to the management of the world cannot be suspected; the whole world is but one commonwealth, whereof God is the monarch. Did the government of the world depend upon the election of men and angels, where would they find perfections capable of so a great a work, but in the supreme wisdom? His wisdom hath already been apparent in those laws, whereby he formed the world into a civil society, and the Israelites into a commonwealth. The one suited to the consciences and reasons of all his subjects, and the other suited to the genius of that particular nation, drawn out of the righteousness of the moral law, and applicable to all cases that might arise among them in their government; so that Moses asserts that the wisdom apparent in their laws enacted by God, as their chief magistrate, would render them famous among other nations in regard of their *wisdom*, as well as their *righteousness*, *Deut.* 4. 6, 7, 9; also this perfection evidences that God doth actually govern the world.

It would not be a commendable thing for a man to make a curious piece of clock-work, and take no care for the orderly motion of it. Would God display so much of his skill in framing the heaven and earth, and none in the actual guidance of them to their particular and universal ends? Did he lay the foundation in order, and fit

* Amyrant. moral. tom. 1. p. 258, 259.

every stone in the building, make all things in weight and measure, to let them afterwards run at hap-hazard? Would he bring forth his power to view in the creation, and let a more glorious perfection lie idle, when it had so large a field to move in? Infinite wisdom is inconsistent with inactivity. All prudence illustrates itself in untying the hardest knots, and disposing the most difficult affairs to a happy and successful issue. All those various arts and inventions among men, which lend their assisting hand to one another, and those various employments their several geniuses lead them to, whereby they support one another's welfare, are beams and instincts of divine wisdom in the government of the world. He that *made all things in wisdom* would not leave his works to act and move only according to their own folly, and idly behold them jumble together, and run counter to that end he designed them for; we must not fancy divine wisdom to be destitute of activity.

3. Here we may see a *ground* of God's patience. The most impotent persons are the most impatient when unforseen emergencies arise, or at events expected by them, when their feeble prudence was not a sufficient match to contest with them, or prevent them. But the wiser any man is, the more he bears with those things which seem to cross his intentions, because he knows he grasps the whole affair, and is sure of attaining the end he proposeth to himself; yet as a finite wisdom can have but a finite patience, so an infinite wisdom possesses an infinite patience. The wise God intends to bring glory to himself, and good to some of his creatures, out of the greatest evils that can happen in the world. He beholds no exorbitant afflictions and monstrous actions, but what he can dispose to a good and glorious end, even to *work together for good to them that love him;* and therefore doth not presently fall upon the actors, till he hath wrought out that temporary glory to himself and good to his people which he designs. *The times of ignorance God winks at*, till he had brought his Son into the world, and manifested his wisdom in redemption, and when this was done he presses men to a *speedy repentance;* that, as he fore-

bore punishing their crimes, in order to the displaying of his wisdom in the designed redemption, so when he had effected it, they must forbear any longer abusing his patience.

4. Hence appears the *immutability* of God in his decrees. He is not destitute of power and strength to change his own purposes; but his infinite perfection of wisdom is a bar to his laying aside his eternal resolves, and forming new ones. He resolves *the end from the beginning*, and *his counsel stands*, *Isa.* 46. 10. stands immoveable, because it is his counsel. It is an impotent counsel, that is subject to a daily thwarting itself. Inconstant persons are accounted by men, destitute of a due measure of prudence. If God change his mind, it is either for the better or the worse: if for the better, he was not wise in his former purpose; if for the worse, he is not wise in his present resolve. No alteration can be without a reflection of weakness upon the former or present determination. God must either cease to be as wise as he was before, or begin to be wiser than he was before the change; which to think or imagine is to deny a deity. If any man change his resolution, he is apprehensive of a flaw in his former purpose, and finds an inconvenience in it, which moves him to such a change; which must be either for want of foresight in himself, or want of a due consideration of the object of his counsel: neither of which can be imagined of God without a denial of the deity. No, there are no blots and blemishes in his purposes and promises. Repentance indeed is an act of wisdom in the creature; but it presupposes folly in his former actions, which is inconsistent with infinite perfection. Men are often too rash in promising; and therefore what they promise in haste, they perform at leisure, or not all: they consider not before they vow, and make after-enquiries, whether they had best stand to it.

The only wise God needs not any after thought or management. As he is sovereignly wise, he sees no cause of reversing any thing, and wants not expedients for his own purpose; and as he is infinitely powerful, he hath no superior to hinder him

from executing his will, and making his people enjoy the effects of his wisdom. If he had a recollection of thoughts, as man hath, and saw a necessity to mend them, he were not infinitely wise in his first decrees. As in creation, he looked back upon the several pieces of that goodly frame he had erected, and saw them so exact, that he did not take up his pencil again to mend any particle of the first draught; so his promises are made with such infinite wisdom and judgment, that what he writes is irreversible, and for ever, as the decrees of the Medes and Persians. All the words of God are eternal, because they are the births of *righteousness* and *judgment*, *Hos.* 2. 19. He is not of a wavering and changeable character; if he *threatens*, he wisely considers what he threatens, if he *promises*, he wisely considers what he promises, and therefore is immutable in both.

5. Hence it follows, that God is a fit object for our *trust and confidence.* For God being infinitely wise, when he promises any thing, he sees every thing which may hinder, and every thing which may promote the execution of it; so that he cannot discover any thing afterwards, that may move him to take up after thoughts: he hath more wisdom than to promise any thing which he knows he cannot accomplish. Though God, as *true*, be the object of our trust; yet God, as *wise*, is the foundation of our trust. We trust him in his promise; the promise was made by mercy, and it is performed by truth; but wisdom conducts all means to the accomplishment of it. There are many men, whose honesty we can confide in, but whose discretion we are diffident of; but there is no defect either of the one or the other, which may scare us from depending upon God in our concerns. The *words of man's wisdom* the apostle entitles *enticing*, 1 *Cor.* 2. 4, in opposition to the words of *God's wisdom*, which are firm, stable, and undeniable demonstrations. As the power of God is an encouragement of trust, because he is able to effect; so the wisdom of God comes into the rank of those attributes which support our faith. To put confidence in him, we must be persuaded, not only that he is ignorant of nothing in the world, but that he is wise to manage the whole course

of nature, and dispose of all his creatures, for the bringing his purposes and his promises to their designed perfection.

6. Hence appears *the necessity of a public review* of the management of the world, and of a day of judgment. As a day of judgment may be inferred from many attributes of God; as his sovereignty, justice, omniscience, &c. so among the rest from this of wisdom. How much of this perfection will lie veiled and obscure, if the sins of men be not brought to view, whereby the ordering the unrighteous actions of men, by his directing and over-ruling hand of providence, in subserviency to his own purposes and his people's good, may appear in all its glory? Without such a public review, this part of wisdom will not be clearly visible; how those actions, which had a vile foundation in the hearts and designs of men, and were formed there to gratify some base lust, ambition, and covetousness, &c. were, by a secret wisdom presiding over them, conducted to amazing ends.

It is a part of divine wisdom to justify itself, and convince men of the reasonableness of its laws, and the unreasonableness of their contradictions to it. The execution of the sentence, is an act of justice; but the conviction of the reasonableness of the sentence, is an act of wisdom, clearing up the righteousness of the proceeding; and this precedes, and the other follows, *to convince all that are ungodly, of all their ungodly deeds, Jude* 15. That wisdom which contrived satisfaction, as well as that justice which required it, is concerned in righting the law, which was enacted by it. The wisdom of a sovereign lawgiver is engaged not to see his law vilified and trampled on, and exposed to the lusts and affronts of men, without being concerned in vindicating the honour of it. It would appear folly to enact and publish it, if there were not a resolution to right and execute it.

The wisdom of God can no more associate iniquity and happiness together, than the justice of God can separate iniquity from punishment. It would be defective, if it did always tamely bear the insolence of offenders, without remark of their crimes, and a justification of the precept rebelliously spurned at. He would be unwise, if

he were unjust; unrighteousness hath no better a title in scripture, than that of folly. It is no part of wisdom, to give birth to those laws which he will always behold ineffectual, and neither vindicate his law by a due execution of the penalty, nor right his own authority, contemned in the violation of his law, by just revenge. Besides, what wisdom would it be for the Sovereign Judge, to lodge such an advocate for himself as conscience, in the soul of man, if it should be always found speaking, and at length be found false in all that it speaks? There is therefore an apparent prospect of the day of account, from the consideration of this perfection of the Divine Nature.

7. Hence we have a ground for a mighty *reverence and veneration* of the divine Majesty. Who can contemplate the sparklings of this perfection in the variety of the works of his hands, and the exact government of all his creatures, without raised admiration of the excellency of his being, and falling in reverence before so great a being? Can we behold so great a mass of matter, digested into several forms, so exact an harmony and temperament in all the creatures, the proportions of numbers and measures, and one creature answering the ends and designs of another, the distinct beauties of all, the perpetual motion of all things without checking one another; the variety of the nature of things, and all acting according to their nature with an admirable agreement; and all together like different strings upon an instrument, emitting divers sounds, but all reduced to order in one delightful lesson. I say, can we behold all this without admiring and adoring the divine wisdom which appears in all?

And from the consideration of this, let us pass to the consideration of his wisdom in redemption; in reconciling divided interests, untying hard knots, drawing one contrary out of another; and we must needs acknowledge that the wisdom of all the men on earth, and angels in heaven, is worse than nothing, and vanity in comparison of this vast ocean. And as we have a greater esteem for those that invent some excellent artificial engines; what reverence ought we to have for him

that hath stamped an inimitable wisdom upon all his works? Nature orders us to give honour to our superiors in knowledge, and confide in their counsels; but none ought to be reverenced as much as God, since none equals him in wisdom.

8. If God be infinitely wise, it shews us *the necessity of our address to him*, and invocation of his name. We are subject to mistakes, and often overseen; we are not able rightly to counsel ourselves. In some cases all creatures are too short-sighted to apprehend them, and too ignorant to give advice proper for them, and to contrive remedies for their ease; but the Lord *is great in counsel, and mighty in working*, *Jer.* 32. 19; great in counsel to advise us, mighty in working to assist us. We know not how to effect a design, or prevent an expected evil. We have an infinite wisdom to go to, that is every way skilful to manage any business we desire, to avert any evil we fear, to accomplish any thing we commit into his hands. When we know not what to resolve, he hath counsel to guide us, *Psal.* 73. 24. He is not more powerful to effect what is needful, than wise to direct what is fitting. All men stand in need of the help of God, as one man stands in need of the assistance of other men, and will not do any thing without advice; and he that takes advice, deserves the title of a wise man, as well as he that gives advice. But no man needs so much the advice of another man, as all men need the counsel and assistance of God: neither is any man's wit and wisdom so far inferior to the prudence and ability of an angel, as the wisdom of the wisest man and the most sharp-sighted angel, is inferior to the infinite wisdom of God. We see, therefore, that it is best for us to go to the fountain, and not content ourselves with the streams; to beg advice from a wisdom that is infinite and infallible, rather than from that which is finite and fallible.

If wisdom be the perfection of the divine Majesty, we may further infer, *how prodigious is the guilt of that contempt with which it is treated in the world.*

All sin strikes at this attribute, and is in one part or other a degrading of it: the first sin directed its venom

against this. As the devils endeavoured to equal their Creator in power; so man endeavoured to equal him in wisdom: both indeed scorned to be ruled by his order; but man evidently exalted himself against the wisdom of God, and aspired to be a sharer with him in his infinite knowledge: would not let him be the *only wise God*, but cherished an ambition to be his partner. Just as if a beam were able to imagine, it might be as bright as the sun; or a spark as full fraught with heat, as the whole element of fire. Man would not submit to the infinite wisdom of God in the prohibition of one single fruit in the garden, when by the right of his sovereign authority, he might have granted him only the use of one. All presumptuous sins are of this nature, they are therefore called reproaches of God, *the soul that doth ought presumptuously, reproacheth the Lord, Numb.* 15. 30. All reproaches are either for natural, moral, or intellectual defects. All reproaches of God, must imply either weakness or unrighteousness in God. If unrighteousness, his holiness is denied; if weakness, his wisdom is blemished. All sin strikes at this perfection two ways.

1. As it *defaceth* the wise workmanship of God. Every sin is a deforming and blemishing our own souls, which, as they are the prime creatures in the lower world, so they have greater characters of divine wisdom in the fabric of them: but this image of God is ruined and broken by sin. Though the spoiling of it be a scorn of his holiness, it is also an affront to his wisdom; for though his power was the cause of the production of so fair a piece, yet his wisdom was the guide of his power, and his holiness the pattern whereby he wrought it: his power effected it, and his holiness was exemplified in it, but his wisdom contrived it. If a man had a curious clock or watch, the framing of which had cost him many years pains and the strength of his skill; for another, after he had seen and considered it, to trample upon it, and crush it in pieces, would argue contempt of the artificer's skill. God hath shewn infinite art in the creation of man; but sin unbeautifies man, and deprives him of his excellency. It obliterates the image of God stamped

by divine wisdom, as though it were an object only of scorn and contempt. The sinner in every sin acts, as if he intended to put himself in a better posture, and in a fairer dress, than the wisdom of God hath put him by creation.

2. In the *slighting his laws.* The laws of God are highly rational; they are drawn from the depths of the divine understanding, wherein there is no obscurity, and no defect. As his understanding apprehends all things in their true reason; so his will enjoins all things for worthy and wise ends: his laws are contrived by his wisdom for the happiness of man, whose happiness, and the methods to it, he understands better than men or angels can do. His laws being the orders of the wisest understanding, every breach of his law is flying in the face of his wisdom. All human laws, though they are enforced by sovereign authority: yet they are, or ought to be in the composing of them, founded upon reason, and should be particular applications of the law of nature, to this or that particular emergency. The laws of God then, who is *summa ratio*, are the birth of the truest reason; though the reason of every one of them may not be so clear to us.

Every law, though it consists in an act of the will, yet doth presuppose an act of the understanding. The act of the divine understanding in framing the law, must be supposed to precede the act of his will, in commanding the observance of that law. So every sin against the law, is not only against the will of God commanding, but the reason of God contriving; and a cleaving to our own reason, rather than the understanding or mind of God: as if God had mistaken in making his law, and we had more understanding to frame a better, and more conducing to our happiness: as if God were not wise enough to govern us, and prescribe what we should do, and what we should avoid; as if he designed not our welfare, but our misfortune.

Whereas the precepts of God are not tyrannical edicts, or acts of mere will, but the fruits of counsel; and therefore every breach of them is a real declamation against

his discretion and judgment, and preferring our own imaginations, or the suggestions of the devil, as our rule, before the results of divine counsel: while we acknowledge him wise in our opinion, we pronounce him foolish by our practice; and when instead of being guided by him, we will guide ourselves. No man will question, but it is a controuling divine wisdom, to make alterations in his precepts; dogmatically, either to add some of their own, or expunge any of his: and is it not a crime of the like reflection to alter them practically? When we will observe one part of the law, and not another part; but pick and choose where we please ourselves, as our humours and carnal interests prompt us. It is to charge that part of the law with folly, to which we refuse conformity.

The more cunning any man is in sin, the more his sin is against divine wisdom, as if he thought to out-wit God. He that receives the promises of God, and the *testimony of Christ, sets to his seal that God is true, John* 3. 33. By the like strength of argument it will undeniably follow, that he that refuseth obedience to his precepts, sets to his seal that God is foolish. Were they not rational, God would not enjoin them; and if they are rational, we are enemies to infinite wisdom, by not complying with them. If infinite prudence hath made the law, why is not every part of it observed; if it were not made with the best wisdom, why is any part of it observed? If the defacing his image be any sin, as defaming his wisdom in creation; the breaking his law is no less a sin, as disgracing his wisdom in his admimistration. It is upon this account likely, that the scripture so often counts sinners fools, since it is certainly inexcusable folly to contradict undeniable and infallible wisdom; yet this is done in the least sin; and as *he that breaks one tittle of the law*, is deservedly counted *guilty* of the breach of the *whole, James* 2. 10, so he that despiseth the least stamp of wisdom in the minutest part of the law, is deservedly counted as a contemner of it, in the frame of the whole statute book. But in particular, the wisdom of God is affronted and invaded,

1. By introducing *new rules and modes of worship*, different from divine institutions. Is not this a manifest reflection on this perfection of God, as though he had not been wise enough to provide for his own honour, and model his own service; but stood in need of our directions, and the *caprichio's* of our brains? Some have observed, that it is a greater sin in worship to do what we should not, than omit what we should perform. The one seems to be out of weakness, because of the high exactness of the law; and the other out of impudence, accusing the wisdom of God of imperfection, and controuling it in its institutions. At best, it seems to be an imputation of human bashfulness to the supreme Sovereign; as if he had been ashamed to prescribe all that was necessary to his own honour, but had left something to the ingenuity and gratitude of men.

Man has, ever since the foolish conceit of his old ancestor Adam, presumed he could be as wise as God; and if he who was created upright entertained such conceits, much more does man now under a mass of corruption, so capable to foment them. This hath been the continual practice of men; not so much to reject what once they had received as divine, but to add something of their own inventions to it. The Heathens renounced not the sacrificing of beasts for the expiation of their offences (which the old world had received by tradition from Adam, and the new world, after the deluge, from Noah.) But they had blended that tradition with rites of their own, and offered creatures unclean in themselves, and not fit to be offered to an infinitely pure being; for the distinction of *clean* and *unclean*, was as ancient as Noah, *Gen.* 8. 20, yea before, *Gen.* 7. 2.

So the Jews did not discard what they had received from God, as circumcision, the passover, and sacrifices; but they would mix heathenish rites with the ceremonies of divine ordination, and practice things which he had not commanded, as well as things which he had enjoined them. And therefore it is observable, that when God taxes them with this sin; he does not say, they brought in those things which he had forbidden into his worship;

but those things which he had not commanded, and had given no order for, to intimate, that they were not to move a step without his rule, *Jer.* 7. 31, and *Levit.* 10. 1, so charging them with impudence and rashness in adding something of their own, after he had revealed to them the manner of his service, as if they were as wise as God. So loath is man to acknowledge the supremacy of divine understanding, and be sensible of his own ignorance.

So after divulging the gospel, the corrupters of religion did not immediately depart from it, they preserved its institutions, but painted and patched them up with pagan ceremonies; and imposed their own dreams with as much force as the revelations of God. Thus hath the papacy turned the simplicity of the gospel into pagan pomp, and religion into politics; and raised the ceremonial law out of the grave, after the wisdom of God had rung her knell, and honourably interred her; and sheltered the heathenish superstitions in christian temples, after the power of the gospel had chased them with all their trumpery, from their ancient habitations. Whence should this proceed, but from a partial atheism, and a mean conceit of the divine wisdom? As though God had not understanding enough to prescribe the form of his own worship; and not wisdom enough to support it, without the aid of human prudence.

Human prudence is too low to parallel divine wisdom; and an incompetent judge of what is fit for an infinite majesty. This is sufficiently seen in the ridiculous and senseless rites among the Heathens; and the cruel and devilish ones, derived from them by the Jews. What work will human wisdom make with divine worship, when it will presume to be the director of it, as a mate with the wisdom of God? Whence will it take its measures, but from sense, humour, and fancy? As though what is grateful and comely to a depraved reason, were as beautiful to an unspotted and infinite mind. Do not such tell the world, that they were of God's cabinet counsel, since they will take upon them to judge, as well as God, what is well pleasing to him? Where will

it have the humility to stop, if it hath the presumption to add any one thing to revealed modes of worship; how did God tax the Israelites with making *idols according to their own understanding? Hos.* 13. 2, imagining their own understandings to be of a finer make, and of a more perfect mould than their Creator's; and that they had fetched more light from the chaos of their own minds, than God had from eternity in his own nature? How slight will the excuse be, God hath *not forbidden* this, or that, when God shall silence men with the question, where or when *did I command* this or that? There was no addition to be made under the law to the meanest instrument God had appointed in his service. The sacred perfume was not to have one ingredient more put into it, that what God had prescribed in the composition; nor was any man upon pain of death to imitate it; nor would God endure, that sacrifices should be consumed with any other fire, than that which came down from heaven. So tender is God of any invasions of his wisdom and authority. In all things of this nature, whatsoever *voluntary humility* and respect to God they may be disguised with, there is a swelling of the *fleshly mind* against infinite understanding, *Colos.* 2. 18.

Such mixtures have not been blessed by God: as God never prospered the mixtures of several kinds of creatures to form and multiply a new species, as being a dissatisfaction with his wisdom as Creator; so he does not prosper mixtures in worship, as being a conspiracy against his wisdom as a law-giver. * The destruction of the Jews was judged by some of their doctors to be for preferring human traditions before the written word; which they ground on, *Their fear of me was taught by the precepts of men, Isa.* 29: 33. The injunctions of men were the rule of their worship and not the prescripts of my law. To conclude, such as make alterations in religion different from the first institution, are intolerable busy-bodies, that will not let God alone with his own

* Vaisin. The Talmud takes notice that the court of Bethany was wasted three years before Jerusalem, because they preferred their own words before the words of the law.

affairs. Vain man would be wiser than his maker, and be dabbling in that which is his sole prerogative.

2. In *neglecting* means instituted by God. When men have risings of heart against God's ordinances, *they reject the counsel of the Lord against themselves, or in themselves, Luke* 7. 30, ἠθέτησαν. They disannulled the wisdom of God, the spring of his ordinances: all neglects are disregards of divine prescriptions, as impertinent and unavailable to that end for which they were appointed, and as not being suited to the common dictates of reason; sometimes out of a voluntary humility, such as Peter's was, when he denied Christ's condescension to wash his feet, *John* 13. 8, and thereby judged of the comeliness of his master's intention and action. Such as continually neglect the great institution of the Lord's supper out of a sense of unworthiness, are in the same rank with Peter, and do, as well as he, fall under the blame and reproof of Christ.

Men would be saved, and use the means, but either means of their own appointment or not all the means of God's ordering.* They would have God's wisdom and will condescend to theirs, and not theirs conformed to God. As if our blind judgments were fittest to make the election of the paths to happiness. Like Naaman, who when he was ordered by the prophet for the cure of his *leprosy* to *wash seven times in Jordan*, would be the prophet's director, and have him touch him with his hand: as if a patient sick of a desperate disease, should prescribe to his skilful physician what remedies he should order for his cure, and make his own infirm reason, or his gust and palate, the rule, rather than the physician's skill.

Men's inquiries are, *Who will shew us any good?* They rather fasten upon any means than what God hath ordained. † We invert the order divine wisdom hath established, when we would have God save us in our own way, not his. It is the same thing, as if we would have God nourish us without bread, and cure our diseases

* Pont. Medit. part. 3. p. 366. Durant. de Tent. p. 403, 404.

without medicines, and increase our wealth without our industry, and cherish our souls without his word and ordinances. It is to demand of him an alteration of his methods, and a separation of that which he hath by his eternal judgment joined together. Therefore for a man to pray to God to save him when he will not use the means he hath appointed for salvation, when he slights the word, which is the instrument of salvation, is a contempt of the wisdom of divine institutions.

Also in omissions of prayer; when we consult not with God upon emergent occasions, we trust more to our own wisdom than God's, and imply that we stand not in need of his conduct, but have ability to direct ourselves, and accomplish our ends without his guidance. Not seeking God is by the prophet taxed as a reflection upon this perfection of God, *They look not to the holy one of Israel, neither seek the Lord, &c. Isa.* 31. 1, 2. And the like charge he brings against them, *they are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself, not consulting God, Hos.* 8. 9.

3. In *censuring* God's revelations and actions, if they be not according to our schemes. When we will not submit to his plain will, without penetrating into the unrevealed reason of it, nor adore his counsels without controuling them; as if we could correct both law and gospel, and frame a better method of redemption than that of God's contriving. Thus men slighted the wisdom of God in the gospel, because it did not agree with that philosophical wisdom and reason they had derived by education from their masters, contrary to their practice in their superstitious worship; where the oracles they thought divine were entertained with reverence, not with dispute; and though ambiguous were not counted ridiculous by the worshipper, 1 *Cor.* 1. 21, 22. How foolish is man in this, wherein he would be accounted wise? Adam in innocence was unfit to controul the doctrine of God when the eye of his reason was clear; and much more are we since the depravation of our nature. The revelations of God tower above reason in its purity; and much more above reason in its depravity and earthi-

ness. The rays of divine wisdom are too bright for our human understandings, much more for our sinful understandings. It is base to set up reason, a finite principle, against an infinite wisdom; much baser to set up a depraved and purblind reason, against an all-seeing and holy wisdom. If we would have a reason for all that God speaks, and all that God acts, our wisdom must become infinite as his, or his wisdom become finite as ours.

All the censures of God's revelations arise from some prejudicate opinions, or traditional maxims that have enthroned themselves in our minds, which are made the standard whereby to judge of the things of God, and receive or reject them as they agree with, or dissent from, those principles, *Coloss.* 2. 8. Hence it was that the philosophers, in the primitive times were the greatest enemies to the gospel: and the contempt of divine wisdom, in making reason the supreme judge of divine revelation, was the fruitful mother of the heresies in all ages, springing up in the church, and especially of that Socinianism, that daily insinuates itself into the minds of men. This is a wrong to the wisdom of God. He that censures the words or actions of another implies that he is, in his censure, wiser than the person censured by him. It is as insupportable to determine the truth of God's plain dictates by our reason, as it is to measure the suitableness or unsuitableness of his actions by the humour of our will. We may sooner think to span the sun, or grasp a star, or see a gnat swallow a leviathan, than fully understand the counsels of eternity. To this we may refer too curious enquiries into divine methods, and *intruding into those things which are not revealed*, *Coloss.* 2. 18. It is to affect a wisdom equal with God, and an ambition to be of his cabinet-counsel. We are not content to be creatures, that is, to be every way below God, below him in widom as well as power.

4. In *prescribing* God's method of acting. When we pray for a thing without due submission to God's will; as if we were his counsellors, yea his tutors, and not his subjects, and God were bound to follow our humours,

and be swayed according to the judgment of our ignorance; when we would have such a mercy which God thinks not fit to give, or have it in this method, which God designs to convey through another channel. Thus we would have the only wise God take his measures from our passions: such a controuling of God was Jonah's anger about a gourd, *it displeased* Jonah *exceedingly, and he was very angry, Jonah* 3. 10. We would direct him how to dispose of us; as though he that had infinite wisdom to contrive and rear the excellent fabric of the world had not wisdom enough, without our discretion, to place us in a sphere proper for his own ends, and the use he intends us in the universe. All the speeches of men, such as "Would I had been in such an office, had such a charge: would I had such a mercy, in such a method or by such instruments," all such speeches are intrenchments upon God's wise disposal of affairs.

This imposing upon God is a hellish disposition, and in hell we find it. The rich man in hell, that pretends some charity for his brethren on earth, would direct God a way to prevent their ruin, by sending *one from the dead* to teach them, as a more effectual means than *Moses and the prophets, Luke* 16. 29, 30. It is a temper also to be found on earth; what else was the language of Saul's saving the Amalekites' cattle against the plain command of God, 1 *Sam.* 15. 15. As if God in his fury had overshot himself, and overlooked his altar, in depriving it of so great a booty for its service: as if it were an unwise thing in God to lose the prey of so many stately cattle, that might make the altar smoke with their entrails, and serve to expiate the sins of the people; and therefore he would rectify that which he thought to be an oversight in God, and so magnifies his own prudence and discretion above the divine. We will not let God act as he thinks fit, but will be directing him and *teaching him knowledge, Job* 21. 22. As if God were a statue, an idol that had eyes and saw not, hands but acted not; and could be turned, as an image may be, to what quarter of the heaven *we* please. The wisdom of God is unbiassed; he orders nothing but what is fittest for

his end, and we would have our shallow minds the bias of God's acting. And will not God resent such an indignity, as a reflection upon his wisdom as well as his authority, when we intimate that we have better heads than he, and that he comes short of us in understanding?

5. In *murmuring* and impatience. One demands a reason why he hath this or that cross? Why he hath been deprived of such a comfort, lost such a venture, languishes under such a sickness, is tormented with such pains, oppressed by tyrannical neighbours, is unsuccessful in such designs? In these and such like the wisdom of God is questioned and defamed. All impatience is a suspicion, if not condemnation, of the prudence of God's methods, and would make human feebleness and folly the rule of God's dealing with his creatures. This is presuming to instruct God, and reproving him for unreasonableness in his proceedings, when his dealings with us do not exactly answer our fancies and wishes; as if God, who made the world in wisdom, wanted skill for the management of his creatures in it. *Shall he that contends with the Almighty instruct him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it. Job* 40. 2. We that are not wise enough to know ourselves, and what is needful for us, presume to have wit enough to guide God in his dealing with us. The wisdom of God rendered Job more useful to the world by his afflictions, in making him a pattern of patience, than if he had continued him in a confluence of all worldly comforts, wherein he had been beneficial only in communicating his morsels to his poor neighbours. All murmuring is charging error upon unerring wisdom.

6. In *pride and haughtiness of spirit.* No proud man but sets his heart *as the heart of God, Ezek.* 28. 2, 3. The wisdom of God hath given to men divers offices, and set them in divers places; some have more honourable charges, some meaner. Not to give that respect their offices and places call for, is to quarrel with the wisdom of God, and overturn the rank and order wherein he hath placed things. It is unfit we should *affront* God in the disposal of his creatures, and intimate to him by our carriage, that he had done more wisely in placing ano-

ther, and that he hath done foolishly in placing this or that man in such a charge. Sometimes men are unworthy the place they fill; they may be set there in judgment to themselves and others. But the wisdom of God in his management of things, is to be honoured and regarded. It is *infringing* the wisdom of God, when we have a vain opinion of ourselves, and are blind to others. When we think ourselves monarchs, and treat others as worms in comparison of ourselves. He who would reduce all things to his own honour, perverts the order of the world, and would constitute another order than what the wisdom of God hath established; and move them to an end contrary to the intention of God, and charges God with want of discretion and skill.

7. *Distrust of God's promise* is an impeachment of his wisdom. A secret reviling of it, as if he had not taken due consideration before he passed his word; or a suspicion of his power as if he could not accomplish his word. We trust the physician's skill with our bodies, and the lawyer's counsel with our estates; but are loath to rely upon God for the concerns of our lives. If he be wise to dispose of us, why do we distrust him? If we distrust him, why do we embrace an opinion of his wisdom?

Unbelief also is a contradiction to the wisdom of God in the gospel, &c. but that I have already handled in a discourse of the nature on unbelief.

Finally, If God hath an infinite wisdom, to conduct us in our affairs, rectify us in our mistakes, and assist us in our straits, we have, in that wisdom, an inexhaustible source of *comfort*. It is an inestimable privilege to have a God in covenant with us; so wise to communicate all good, and to prevent all evil; who hath infinite ways to bring to pass his gracious intentions towards us. *How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out; Rom.* 11. 33. His judgment or decrees are incomprehensibly wise, and the ways of effecting them, are as wise as his resolves effected by them. We can as little search into his methods of acting, as we can into his wisdom of resolving; both his judgments and ways are unsearchable.

1. Comfort in all *straits and afflictions.* There is a wisdom in inflicting them, and a wisdom in removing them. He is wise to suit his medicines to the humour of our disease, though he does not to the humour of our wills; he cannot mistake the nature of our distemper, or the virtue of his own remedy. Like a skilful physician, he sometimes prescribes bitter potions, and sometimes cheering cordials, according to the strength of the malady and necessity of the patient, to reduce him to health. As nothing comes from him but what is for our good, so nothing is acted by him in a rash and temerarious way. His wisdom is as infinite as his goodness; and as exact in managing as his goodness is plentiful in streaming out to us. He understands our griefs, weighs our necessities, and no remedies are beyond the reach of his contrivance. When our feeble wits are bewildered in a maze, and at the end of their line for relief, the remedies unknown to us are not unknown to God. When we know not how to prevent a danger, the wise God hath a thousand blocks to lay in the way. When we know not how to free ourselves from an oppressive evil, he hath a thousand ways of relief.

He knows how to *time* our crosses, and his own blessings. The heart of a wise God, as well as the heart of a wise man, *discerns both time and judgment*, *Eccles.* 8. 5. There is as much judgment in sending them, as judgment in removing them. How comfortable is it to think that our distresses, as well as our deliverances, are the fruits of infinite wisdom? Nothing is done by him too soon or too slow; but in the true point of time, with all its due circumstances, most conveniently for his glory and our good. How wise is God, to bring the glory of our salvation out of the depths of a seeming ruin, and make the evils of affliction subservient to the good of the afflicted?

2. In *temptations*, his wisdom is no less employed in *permitting* them than in bringing them to *a good issue.* His wisdom in leading our Saviour to be tempted of the devil, was to fit him for our succour, and his wisdom in suffering us to be tempted, is to fit us for his own service, and

our salvation. He makes a thorn in the flesh to be an occasion of refreshing grace to the spirit, and brings forth cordial grapes from those prickling brambles, and magnifies his grace by his wisdom, from the deepest subtilties of hell. Let Satan's intentions be what they will, he can be for him at every turn, to outwit him in his stratagems, to baffle him in his enterprizes; to make him instrumental for our good, where he designs nothing but our hurt. The Lord hath his methods of deliverance from him, *The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation*, 2 *Pet.* 2. 9.

3. In *denials*, or *delays* of *answers of prayer*. He is gracious to hear; but he is wise to answer in an *acceptable time*, and succour us in a day proper for our *salvation*, 2 *Cor.* 6. 2. We have partial affections to ourselves. Ignorance is natural to us, *We ask we know not what*, *Rom.* 8. 26, because we ask out of ignorance. God grants what he knows, what is fit for him to do, and fit for us to receive; and the exact season wherein it is fittest for him to bestow a mercy. As God would have us bring forth our fruit in season, so he will send forth his mercies in season.

He is wise to suit his remedy to our condition, to time it so, as that we shall have an evident prospect of his wisdom in it; that more of divine skill, and less of human, may appear in the issue. He is ready at our call; but he will not answer till he sees the season fit to reach out his hand. He is wise to prove our faith, to humble us under the sense of our own unworthiness, to whet our affections, to set a better estimate on the blessings prayed for, and that he may double the blessing, as we do our devotion; but when his wisdom sees us fit to receive his goodness, he grants what we stand in need of. He is wise to choose the fittest time, and faithful to give the best covenant mercy.

4. In all *evils threatened* to the church by her *enemies*. He hath knowledge to foresee them, and wisdom to disappoint them, *He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong*, *Job* 5. 13. The church hath the wisdom of God, to enter the lists with the policy of hell. He defeated the serpent in

the first net he laid, and brought a glorious salvation out of his infernal designs, and is yet as skilful to disappoint the after-artifices of the serpentine brood. The policy of hell, and the subtlety of the world, are no better than *folly with God.* All creatures are fools, as creatures, in comparison with the Creator. The angels he chargeth with folly, much more us sinners. Depraved understandings are not fit mates for a pure and unblemished mind. Pharaoh, with his wisdom, finds a grave in the sea; and Ahithophel's plots are finished in his own murder. He breaks the enemies by his power, and orders them by his skill to be a feast to his people. *Thou brakest the head of the leviathan, and gavest him to be meat to the people in the wilderness, Psal.* 74. 14. The spoils of the Egyptian's carcasses cast upon the shore were as meat to them; as being a deliverance the church might feed upon in all ages, in a wilderness condition, to maintain their faith, the vital principle of the soul. There is a wisdom superior to the subtilities of men, which laughs at their follies, and *hath them in derision, Psal.* 2. 4. *There is no wisdom or counsel against the Lord, Prov.* 21. 30. You never question the wisdom of an artist, to use his file, when he takes it into his hand: wicked instruments are God's axes and files; let him alone, he hath skill enough to manage them: God hath too much affection to destroy his people, and wisdom enough to beautify them by the worst instruments he uses. He can make all things conspire in perfect harmony for his own ends, and his people's good, when they see no way to escape a danger feared, or attain a blessing wanted.

PART VIII.

OBLIGATIONS RELATIVE TO THE WISDOM OF GOD.

Believers must meditate on the wisdom of God—The end for which they were created—Not to observe the wisdom of God is brutish—The consideration of his wisdom will increase humility—Will increase gratitude—Will promote the knowledge of redemption—Meditation on the wisdom of God the beginning of heaven upon earth—The wisdom of God in the work of redemption, to be studied and admired—Man should not be proud of his own wisdom—Should seek wisdom of God—Should submit to his wisdom—In his revelations—In his precepts—In all crosses—God not to be censured in any of his ways.

I. *MEDITATE* on the wisdom of God in creation and government. How little do we think of God when we behold his works? Our sense dwells upon the surface of plants and animals, beholds the variety of their colours, and the progress in their motion: our reason studies the qualities of them; our spirits seldom take flight to the divine wisdom which framed them. Our senses engross our minds from God, that we scarce have a thought free to bestow upon the Maker of them. The constancy of seeing things that are common, stifles our admiration of God, due upon the sight of them. How seldom do we raise our souls as far as heaven, in our views of the order of the world, the revolutions of the seasons, the natures of the creatures that are common among us, and

the mutual assistances they give to each other? Since God hath manifested himself in them, to neglect the consideration of them, is to neglect the manifestation of God, and the way whereby he hath transmitted something of his perfections to our understanding. It renders men inexcusably guilty of not glorifying God, *Rom.* 1. 19, 20. We can never neglect the meditation of the creatures, without a blemish cast upon the Creator's wisdom. As every river can conduct us to the sea; so every creature points us to an ocean of infinite wisdom. Not the minutest of them, but rich tracts of this may be observed in them, and a due sense of God results from them. They are exposed to our view, that something of God may be lodged in our minds; that as our bodies extract their quintessence for our nourishment, so our minds may extract the quintessence of the Maker's praise.

Though God is principally to be praised in and for Christ; yet as grace does not raze out the law of nature, so the operations of grace put not the dictates of nature to silence, nor suspend the homage due to God upon our inspection of his works. God hath given full testimonies of this perfection in the heavenly bodies, dispersing their light, and distributing their influences to every part of the world: in framing men into societies, giving them various dispositions, for the preservation of governments; making some wise for counsel, others martial for action; changing old empires, and raising new. Which way soever we cast our eyes, we shall find frequent occasions to cry out, *Oh the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!* To this purpose, we must not only look upon the bulk and outside of his works, but consider from what principles they were raised, in what order disposed, and the exact symmetry and proportion of their parts. When a man comes into a city or temple, and only considers the surface of the buildings, they will amaze his sense, but not better his understanding; unless he considers the methods of the work, and the art whereby it was erected.

1. This was *an end* for which they were created. God did not make the world for man's use only, but chiefly for

his own glory; for man's use to enjoy his creatures, and for his own glory to be acknowledged in his creatures, that we may consider his art in framing them, and his skill in disposing them; and not only gaze upon the glass without considering the image it represents, and acquainting ourselves whose image it is. The creatures were not made for themselves, but for the service of the Creator, and the service of man. Man was not made for himself, but for the service of the Lord that created him. He is to consider the beauty of the creation, that he may thereby glorify the Creator. He knows in part their excellency; the creatures themselves do not. If therefore man be idle and unobservant of them, he deprives God of the glory of his wisdom, which he should have by his creatures. The inferior creatures themselves cannot observe it. If man regard it not, what becomes of it; his glory can only be handed to him by man. The other creatures cannot be active instruments of his glory, because they know not themselves, and therefore cannot render him an active praise. Man is therefore bound to praise God for himself, and for all his creatures; because he only knows himself, and the perfections of the creatures, and the author both of himself and them. God created such variety, to make a report of himself to us; we are to receive the report, and to reflect it back to him. To what purpose did he make so many things, not necessary for the support and pleasure of our lives, but that we should behold him in them, as well as in the other?

We cannot behold the wisdom of God in his own essence and eternal ideas, but by the reflection of it in the creatures: as we cannot steadily behold the sun with our eye, but either through a glass, or by reflection of the image of it in the water. God would have us meditate on his perfections; he therefore chose the same day wherein he reviewed his work, and rested from it, to be celebrated by man for the contemplation of him, *Gen.* 2. 2, 3, that we should follow his example, and rejoice as himself did, in the frequent reviews of his wisdom and goodness in them. In vain would the creatures afford matter for this study, if they were wholly neglected.

God offers something to our consideration in every creature: shall the beams of God shine round about us, and strike our eyes, and not affect our minds? Shall we be like ignorant children, that view the pictures, or point to the letters in a book without any sense and meaning? How shall God have the homage due to him from his works, if man hath no care to observe them? The 148th Psalm is an exhortation to this, the view of them should often extract from us a wonder of the like nature of that of David's, *Oh Lord, how wonderful are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all, Psal.* 114. 24. The world was not created to be forgotten, nor man created to be unobservant of it.

2. If we observe not the wisdom of God in the views of the creatures, *we do no more than brutes.* To look upon the works of God in the world, is no higher an act than mere animals perform. The glories of heaven, and beauties of the earth, are visible to the sense of beasts and birds. A brute beholds the motion of a man, but understands not the inward springs of motion; the end for which we move, or the soul that acts us in our motion; much less that invisible power which presides over the creatures, and conducts their motion. If a man do no more than this, he goes not a step beyond a brutish nature, and may very well acknowledge himself with Asaph, a foolish and *ignorant beast before God.* The world is viewed by beasts, but the author of it to be contemplated by man. Since we are in a higher rank than beasts, we owe a greater debt than beasts; not only to enjoy the creatures, as they do, but behold God in the creatures which they cannot do. The contemplation of the reason of God in his works, is a noble and suitable employment for a rational creature: we have not only sense to perceive them, but souls to mind them. The soul is not to be without its operation: where the operation of sense ends, the work of the soul ought to begin. We travel over them by our senses, as brutes; but we must pierce further by our understandings, as men, and perceive and praise him that lies invisible in his visible manufactures. Our senses are given us as servants to the soul, and our

souls, bestowed upon us for the knowledge and praise of their and our common Creator.

3. This would be a means to *increase our humility.* We should then flag our wings, and veil our sails, and acknowledge our own wisdom to be as a drop to the ocean, and a shadow to the sun. We should have mean thoughts of the nothingness of our reason, when we consider the sublimity of the divine wisdom. Who can seriously consider the sparks of infinite skill in the creature, without falling down at the feet of the divine majesty, and acknowledging himself a dark and foolish creature. When the psalmist *considered the heavens*, the *moon*, and *stars*, and God's ordination and disposal of them, the use that results from it, is, *what is man, that thou art mindful of him?* We should no more think to equal him in prudence, or set up the spark of our reason to vie with the sun. Our reason would more willingly submit to the revelation, when the characters of divine wisdom are stamped upon it, when we find his wisdom in creation incomprehensible to us.

4. It would help us in *our acknowledgments* of God, for his goodness to us. When we behold the wisdom of God in creatures below us, and how ignorant they are of what they possess. It will cause us to reflect upon the deeper impressions of wisdom in the frame of our own bodies and souls, an excellency far superior to theirs; this would make us admire the magnificence of his wisdom and goodness, and sound forth his praise for advancing us in dignity above other works of his hands, and stamping on us by infinite art, a nobler image of himself. And by such a comparison of ourselves with the creatures below us, we should be induced to act excellently, according to the nature of our souls; not brutishly, according to the nature of the creatures God hath put under our feet.

5. By the contemplation of the creatures, we may receive some *assistance in clearing our knowledge* in the wisdom of redemption. Though they cannot of themselves inform us of it; yet since God hath revealed his redeeming grace, they can illustrate some particulars of it to us. Hence the scripture makes use of the creatures,

to set forth things of a higher orb to us: our Saviour is called a sun, a vine, and a lion; the spirit likened to a dove, fire, and water. The union of Christ and his church is set forth by the marriage union of Adam and Eve. God hath placed in corporeal things the images of spiritual, and wrapped up in his creating wisdom the representations of his redeeming grace: whence some call the creatures, "natural types" of what was to be transacted in a new formation of the world, and allusions to what God intended in and by Christ.

6. The meditation of God's wisdom in the creatures, is in part a *beginning of heaven upon earth.* No doubt but there will be a perfect opening of the model of divine wisdom. Heaven will clear what is now obscure, and fully explain what seems at present intricate. *In his light shall we see light, Psal.* 36. 9: all the light in creation, government, and redemption. The wisdom of God in the new heavens, and the new earth, would be to little, purpose if that also were not to be regarded by the inhabitants of them. As the saints are to be restored to the state of Adam, and higher; so they are to be restored to the employment of Adam, and higher: but his employment, was to behold God in the creatures. The world was so soon depraved, that God had but little joy in, and man but little knowledge of, his works.

And since the wisdom of God in creation is so little seen by our ignorance here, would not God lose much of the glory of it, if the glorified souls should lose the understanding of it above; when their darkness shall be expelled, and their advantages improved; when the light that Adam lost, shall be fully restored, and with a greater clearness; when the creature shall be restored to its true end, and reason to its true perfection; when the fountains of the depths of nature and government shall be opened, knowledge shall increase, and, according to the increase of our knowledge, shall the admiration of divine wisdom increase also. The wisdom of God in creation, was not surely intended to lie wholly unobserved in the greatest part of it; but since there was so little time for the full observation of it, there will be a time where-

in the wisdom of God shall enjoy a resurrection, and be fully contemplated by his understanding and glorified creature.

II. *Study* and *admire* the wisdom of God *in redemption.* This is the duty of all christians. We are not called to understand the great depths of philosophy; we are not called to skill in the intricacies of civil government, or to understand all the methods of physic: but we are called to be christians, that is, students of divine evangelical wisdom. There are first principles to be learned; but those principles are not to be rested in, without a futher progress. *Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection, Heb.* 6. 1. Duties must be practised, but knowledge is not to be neglected. The study of gospel mysteries, the harmony of divine truths, the sparkling of divine wisdom, in their mutual combination to the great ends of God's glory and man's salvation, is an incentive to duty, a spur to worship, and particularly to the greatest and highest part of worship, that part which shall remain in heaven; the admiration and praise of God, and delight in him. If we acquaint not ourselves with the impressions of the glory of divine wisdom in it, we shall not much regard it as worthy our observance in that duty.

The gospel is a mystery; and as a mystery hath something great and magnificent in it, worthy of our daily inspection; we shall find fresh springs of new wonders, which we shall be invited to adore with a religious astonishment. It will both raise and satisfy our longings. Who can come to the depths of *God manifested in the flesh?* How amazing is it, and unworthy of a slight thought, that the death of the Son of God should purchase the happy immortality of a sinful creature, and the glory of a rebel be wrought by the ignominy of so great a person? That our Mediator should have a nature whereby to covenant with his Father, and a nature whereby to be a surety for the creature? How admirable is it, that the fallen creature should receive an advantage by the forfeiture of his happiness? How mysterious

is it, that the Son of God should bow down to death upon a cross, for the satisfaction of justice; and rise triumphantly out of the grave, as a declaration, that justice was satisfied? That he should be exalted to heaven, to intercede for us; and at last return into the world, to receive us, and invest us with a glory for ever with himself?

Are these things worthy of a careless regard, or a stupid amazement? What understanding can pierce into the depths of the divine doctrine of the incarnation and birth of Christ; the indissoluble union of the two natures? What capacity is able to measure the miracles of that wisdom, found in the whole draught and scheme of the gospel? Does it not merit then to be the object of our daily meditation? How comes it to pass then, that we are so little curious to concern our thoughts in those wonders, that we scarce taste, or sip of these delicacies? That we busy ourselves in trifles, and consider what we shall eat, and in what fashion we shall be dressed; please ourselves with the ingeniousness of a lace or feather; admire a moth-eaten manuscript, or some half-worn piece of antiquity; and think our time ill-spent in contemplating and celebrating that wherein God hath busied himself, and eternity is designed for the perpetual expressions of?

How inquisitive are the blessed angels? with what vigour do they renew their daily contemplations of it, and receive fresh contentment from it; still learning, and still enquiring? 1 *Pet.* 1. 12, their eye is never off the mercy seat; they strive to see the bottom of it, and employ all the understanding they have to conceive the wonders of it. Shall the angels be ravished with it, and bend themselves down to study it, who have but little interest in it in comparison of us, for whom it was both contrived and dispensed? And shall not our pains be greater for this hidden treasure? Is not that worthy the study of a rational creature, that is worthy the study of the angelical? There must indeed be much pains taken in this work, *Prov.* 2. 4. A lazy arm will not sink to

the depth of a mine. The neglect of meditating on it is inexcusable, since it hath the title and character of the wisdom of God.

The ancient prophets searched into it, when it was folded up in shadows, when they saw only the fringes of wisdom's garment; and shall not we, since the sun hath mounted up in our horizon, and sensibly scattered the light of the knowledge of this and the other perfections of God? As the Jewish sabbath was appointed to celebrate the perfections of God, discovered in creation; so is the christian sabbath appointed to meditate on, and bless God for, the discovery of his perfections in redemption. Let us therefore receive it according to its worth; let it be our only rule to walk by. It is worthy to be valued above all other counsels: and we should never think of it without the doxology of the apostle, *to the only wise God be glory through Jesus Christ, for ever;* that our speculations may end in affectionate admirations, and thanksgivings, for that which is so full of wonders! What a confined prospect should we have had of God, and the happiness of man, had not his wisdom and goodness revealed things to us? The gospel is a *marvellous light,* and should not be regarded with a stupid ignorance, and pursued with a dull practice.

III. Let none of us be *proud of,* or *trust in,* our own wisdom. Man by affecting wisdom out of the way of God, received such injury in his understanding, as hath continued near six thousand years; and ever since our own wisdom and *knowledge hath perverted us, Isa.* 47. 10. To be guided by this, is to be under the conduct of a blind leader, and follow a traitor and enemy to God and ourselves. Man's prudence often proves hurtful to him; he often accomplisheth his ruin, while he designs his establishment; and finds his fall, where he thought to settle his fortune: such bad eyes hath human wisdom often in its own affairs. Those that have been elevated with a conceit of their own cunning, have at last proved the greatest fools. God delights to make *foolish the wisdom of this world.* Thus God wrote folly upon the craft of Ahitophel, and simplicity upon the subtle projects

of Herod against our Saviour; and the devil, the prince of carnal wisdom, was befooled into a furthering our redemption by his own projects to hinder it. Carnal policy against the prescripts of divine wisdom, never prospers; it is like an *ignis fatuus*, which leads men out of the way of duty, and out of the way of security, and perverts them into the mire, and dangerous precipices.

When Jeroboam would coin a religion to serve his interest of state, he tore up the foundations both of his kingdom and family. The way the Jews took to prevent a fresh invasion of the Romans, by the crucifying Christ, brought the judgment more swift upon them, *John* 11. 48. There is no man ruined here, or damned hereafter, but by his own wisdom and will. *The fear of the Lord*, and departure from evil, are inconsistent with an over-weaning conceit of our own wisdom; *Prov.* 3. 5, 7, and leaning to our own understanding, is inconsistent with a *trusting in the Lord with all our hearts.* It is as much deifying ourselves to trust to our own wit, as it is deifying the creature to affect or confide in it, superior to God, or equally with him. The true way to wisdom is to be sensible of our own folly. *If any man be wise, let him become a fool*, 1 *Cor.* 3. 18. He that distrusts his own guidance, will more securely and successfully follow the counsel of another in whom he confides. The more water, or any other liquor, is poured out of a vessel, the more air enters. The more we distrust our own wisdom, the more capable we are of the conduct of God's. Had Jehoshaphat relied upon his own policy, he might have found defeat when he met with deliverance; but he disowned his own skill and strength, in telling God, *We know not what to do, but our eyes are towards thee*, 2 *Chron.* 20. 12. Let us therefore with Agur, disesteem our own understanding to esteem divine. Human prudence is like a spider's-web, easily blown away, and swept down by the besom of some unexpected revolution. God by his infinite wisdom can cross the wisdom of man, and make a man's own prudence hang in his own light. *The understanding of their prudent men shall be hid*, *Isaiah* 29. 14.

IV. *Seek to God for wisdom.* The wisdom we have by nature is like the weeds the earth brings forth without tillage. Our wisdom since the fall, is the wisdom of the serpent, without the innocence of the dove; it flows from self-love, and runs into self-interest. It is the wisdom of the flesh, and prudence, to manage means for the contenting our lusts. Our best wisdom is imperfect, a mere nothing and vanity, in comparison of the divine, as our beings are in comparison of his essence. We must go to God for a holy and innocent wisdom, and fill our cisterns from a pure fountain. The wisdom that was the glory of Solomon, was the donation of the most high. *If any man want wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him, James* 1. 5. The faculty of understanding is from God by nature; but a heavenly light to direct the understanding is from God by grace. Children have an understanding, but stand in need of wise masters to rectify it, and form judicious notions in it.

There is a spirit in man, but the inspiration of the Almighty gives him understanding, Job 32. 8. We must ask wisdom of God. The gospel is the *wisdom of God;* the concerns of it great and mysterious, not to be known without a new understanding, 1 *John* 5. 20. A new understanding is not to be had but from the Creator of the first. The Spirit of God is the searcher of the deep things of God; the revealer of them to us, and the enlightener of our minds to apprehend them; and therefore called, a *spirit of wisdom and revelation, Eph.* 1. 17. Christ is made wisdom to us, as well as righteousness; not only by imputation, but effusion.* Seek to God therefore for that wisdom which is like the sun, and not that worldly wisdom which is like a shadow: for that wisdom whose effects are not so outwardly glorious, but inwardly sweet, seek it from him, and seek it in his word, that is the transcript of divine wisdom; through his precepts understanding is to be had. *Psal.* 119. 104. As

* Seaman's Sermons before the Parliament.

the wisdom of men appears in their laws; so doth the wisdom of God in his statutes.

By this means we arrive to a heavenly sagacity. If these be rejected, what wisdom can be in us? A dream and conceit only; *They have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them? Jer.* 8. Who knows how to order any concerns as he ought, or any one faculty of his soul? Therefore desire God's direction in outward concerns, in personal, family, in private and public: he hath not only wisdom for our salvation, but for our outward direction. He doth not only guide us in the one, and leave Satan to manage us in the other. Those that go with Saul to a witch of Endor, go to hell for craft, and prefer the wisdom of the hostile serpent, before the holy counsel of a faithful Creator. If you want health in your body, you advise with a physician; if directions for your estate, you resort to a lawyer; if passage for a voyage, you address to a pilot; why not much more yourselves, your all, to a wise God. As Pliny said concerning a wise man, "Oh, sir, how many Cato's are there in that wise person?" How much more wisdom than men or angels possess, is infinitely centered in the wise God?

V. *Submit* to the wisdom of God in all cases. What else was inculcated in the first precept, forbidding man to eat of the fruit of the *tree of knowledge of good and evil*, but that he should take heed of the swelling of his mind against the wisdom of God? It is wisdom incomprehensible to flesh and blood: we should adore it in our minds, and resign up ourselves to it in our practice: how unreasonable are repinings against God, whereby a creature's ignorance indicts and judges a Creator's prudence? Were God weak in wisdom, and only mighty in power, we might suspect his conduct. Power without wisdom and goodness is an unruly and ruinous thing in the world. But God being infinite in one, as well as the other, we have no reason to be jealous of him, and repine against his methods; why should we quarrel with him that we are not as high, or as wealthy as others; that we have not presently the mercy we want? If he be wise,

we ought to stay his time, and wait his leisure, because *he is a God of judgment, Isa.* 30. 18. Presume not to shorten the time which his discretion hath fixed, it is a folly to think to do it. By impatience we cannot hasten relief; we alienate him from us by debasing him to stand at our bar, disturb ourselves, lose the comfort of our lives and the sweetness of his mercy. Submission to God we are in no case exempted from, because there is no case wherein God does not direct all the acts of his will by counsel. Whatsoever is drawn by a straight rule must be right and straight; the rule that is right in itself, is the measure of the straightness of every thing else: whatsoever is wrought in the world by God, must be wise, good, righteous; because God is essentially wisdom, goodness, and righteousness.

1. Submit to God in his *revelations.* Measure them not *by reason:* the truths of the gospel must be received with a self-emptiness and annihilation of the creature. If our reason seems to lift up itself against revelation, because it finds no testimony for it in its own light; consider how crazy it is in natural and obvious things, and therefore sure it is not strong enough to enter into the depths of divine wisdom: the wisdom of God in the gospel is too great an ocean to be laved out by a cockle-shell. It were not infinite, if it were not beyond our finite reach; our reason must as well stoop to his wisdom, as our wills to his sovereignty. How great a vanity is it for a glow-worm to boast, that it is as full of light as the sun in the firmament? for reason to leave its proper sphere, is to fall into confusion, and thicken its own darkness. We should settle ourselves in the belief of the scripture, and confirm ourselves by meditation on those many undeniable arguments, for its divine authority. The fulfilling of its predictions, the antiquity of the writing, the holiness of the precepts, the heavenliness of the doctrine, the glorious effects it produces, different from human methods of success; and submit our reason to the voice of so high a Majesty.

Be not too *curiously inquisitive* into what is not revealed. There is something hid in whatsoever is revea-

led. We know the Son of God was begotten from eternity, but how he was begotten, we are ignorant. We know there is a union of the divine nature with the human, and that the *fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily;* but the manner of its inhabitation we are in a great part ignorant of. We know God hath chosen some and refused others; but the reason why he chose this man and not that, we know not; we can refer it to nothing but his sovereign pleasure. It is revealed that there will be *a day wherein God shall judge the world;* but the particular time is not revealed. We know that God created the world in time; but why he did not create the world millions of years before, we are ignorant of, and our reasons would be bewildered in their too much curiosity. If we ask why he did not create it before, we may as well ask why he did create it then? And may not the same question be asked, if the world had been created millions of years before it was? That he created it in six days, and not in an instant, is revealed; but why he did not do it in a moment, since we are sure he was able to do it, is not revealed. Are the reasons of a wise man's proceedings hid from us, and shall we presume to dive into the reason of the proceedings of an only-wise God, which he hath judged not expedient to discover to us? Some sparks of his wisdom he hath caused to issue out, to exercise and delight our minds; others he keeps within the centre of his own breast: we must not go about to unlock his cabinet. As we cannot reach to the utmost lines of his power; so we cannot grasp the intimate reasons of his wisdom. We must still remember, that which is finite can never be able to comprehend the reasons, motives, and methods of that which is infinite. It doth not become us to be resty, because God hath not admitted us into the debates of eternity. We are as little to be curious at what God hath hid, as to be careless of what God hath manifested. Too great an inquisitiveness beyond our line, is as much a provoking arrogance, as a blockish negligence of what is revealed, is a slighting ingratitude.

2. Submit to God in his *precepts and methods.* Since

they are the results of infinite wisdom, disputes against them are not tolerable: what orders are given out by infallible wisdom are to be entertained with respect and reverence, though the reason of them be not visible to our purblind minds. Shall God have less respect from us than earthly princes, whose laws we observe without being able to pierce into the exact reason of them all? Since we know he hath not a will without an understanding, our observance of him must be without repining; we must not think to mend our Creator's laws, and presume to judge and condemn his righteous statues: if the flesh rise up in opposition, we must cross its motions, and silence its murmurings; his will should be an acceptable will to us, because it is a wise will in itself. God hath no need to impose upon us and deceive us; he hath just and righteous ways to attain his glory and his creature's good. To deceive us, would be to dishonour himself and contradict his own nature. He cannot impose false injurious precepts, or unavailable to his subject's happiness; not false, because of his truth; not injurious, because of his goodness; not vain, because of his wisdom. Submit therefore to him in his precepts, and in his methods too. The honour of his wisdom, and the interest of our happiness calls for it. Had Noah disputed with God about building an ark, and listened to the scoffs of the senseless world, he had perished under the same fate, and lost the honour of a preacher and worker of righteousness. Had not the Israelites been their own enemies, if they had been permitted to be their own guides, and returned to the Egyptian bondage and furnaces, instead of liberty and earthly felicity in Canaan? Had our Saviour gratified the Jews by descending from the cross and freeing himself from the power of his adversaries, he might have had that faith from them which they promised him, but it had been a faith to no purpose, because without ground; they might have believed him to be the Son of God, but he could not have been the Saviour of the world: his death, the great ground and object of faith, had been unaccomplished, they had believed a God pardoning without satisfaction to his

justice, and such a faith could not have rescued them from falling into eternal misery. The precepts and methods of divine wisdom must be submitted to.

3. Submit to God in all *crosses and revolutions.* Infinite wisdom cannot err in any of his paths, or step the least hair's breadth from the way of righteousness: there is the understanding of God in every motion; an eye in every wheel, the wheel that goes over us and crusheth us. We are led by fancy more than reason: we know no more what we ask or what is fit for us, than the mother of Zebedee's children did, when she petitioned Christ for her sons' advancement, when he came into his temporal kingdom, *Mat.* 20. 22. The things we desire might pleasure our fancy or appetite, but impair our health. One man complains for want of children, but knows not whether they may prove comforts or crosses; another for want of health, but knows not whether the health of his body may not prove the disease of his soul. We might lose in heavenly things if we possess in earthly things what we long for. God in his infinite wisdom is fitter to choose our condition than we ourselves; our shallow reason and self-love would wish for those things, that are injurious to God, to ourselves, to the world; but God always chooses what is best for his glory, and what is best for his creatures, either in regard of themselves, or as they stand in relation to him, or to others, as parts of the world.

We are in danger from our self-love, in no danger in complying with God's wisdom: when Rachel would die if she had no children, she had children, but death with one of them, *Gen.* 30. 1. Good men may conclude that whatsoever is done by God in them, or with them, is best and fittest for them; because by the covenant which makes over God to them as their God, the conduct of his wisdom is assured to them as well as any other attribute: and therefore as God in every transaction appears as their God, so he appears as their wise director, and by his wisdom he extracts good out of evil, makes the affliction which destroys our outward comforts, consume our inward defilements; and the waves which

threatened to swallow up the vessel, to cast it upon the shore: and when he hath occasion to manifest his anger against his people, his wisdom directs his wrath. In judgment he hath a work to do upon Zion, and when that work is done, he punishes the fruit of the *stout heart of the king of Assyria*; as in the answers of prayer he doth give oftentimes *above what we ask, or think*, *Eph.* 3. 20, so in outward concerns he doth above what we can expect, or by our short-sightedness conclude will be done; let us therefore in all things frame our minds to the divine wisdom, and say with the psalmist, *The Lord shall choose our inheritance,* and condition *for us. Psal.* 47. 4.

VI. *Censure not God* in any of his ways. Can we understand the full scope of divine wisdom in creation, which is perfected before our eyes? Can we by rational knowledge walk over the whole surface of the earth, and wade through the sea? Can we understand the nature of the heavens? Are all, or most, or the thousandth part of the particles of divine skill, known by us, yea or any of them thoroughly known? How can we then understand his deeper methods in things, that are but of yesterday that we have not had time to view? We should not be too quick or too rash in our judgments of him: the best that we attain to, is but feeble conjectures at the designs of God.

As there is something hid in whatsoever is revealed in his word, so there is something inaccessible to us in his works, as well as in his nature and majesty. In our Saviour's act of washing his disciples' feet, he checked Peter's contradiction, *What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter*, *John* 13. 7. God were not infinitely wise if the reason of all his acts were obvious to our shallowness. He is no profound statesman, whose inward intention can be sounded by vulgar heads, at the first act he starts in his designed method. The wise God is in this, like wise men, that have not breasts like glasses of chrystal, to discover all that they intend. There are *secrets of wisdom above our reach;* nay when we see all

his acts, we cannot see all the draughts of his skill in them. An unskilful hearer of a musical lesson may receive the melody with his ear, and understand not the rarities of the composition as it was wrought by the musician's mind. Under the old testament there was more of divine power, and less of his wisdom apparent in his acts: as his laws, so his acts were more fitted to their sense. Under the new testament there is more of wisdom and less of power; as his laws so his acts are more fitted to a spiritual mind; wisdom is less discernable than power. Our wisdom therefore in this case, as it does in other things, consists in silence and expectation of the end and event of a work. We owe that honour to God that we do to men wiser than ourselves, to imagine he hath reason to do what he does, though our shallowness cannot comprehend it We must suffer God to be wiser than ourselves, and acknowledge that there is something sovereign in his ways not be measured by the feeble reed of our weak understandings, and therefore we should acquiesce in his proceedings; take heed we be not found slanderers of God, but be adorers instead of censurers; and lift up our hands in admiration of him and his ways, instead of citing him to answer it at our bar. Many things in the first appearance may seem to be rash and unjust, which in the issue appear comely and regular. If it had been plainly spoke before, that the Son of God should die, that a most holy person should be crucified, it would have seemed cruel to expose a son to misery; unjust to inflict punishment upon one that was no criminal; to join together exact goodness and physical evil; that the Sovereign should die for the malefactor, and the observer of the law for the idolators of it. But when the whole design is unravelled, what an admirable conjunction is there of justice and mercy, love and wisdom, which before would have appeared absurd to the muddied reason of man?

We see the gardener pulling up some delightful flowers by the roots, digging up the earth, overwhelming it with dung; an ignorant person would imagine him wild, out

of his wits, and charge him with spoiling his garden; but when the spring is arrived, the spectator will acknowledge his skill in his former operations.

The truth is, the whole design and methods of God are not to be judged by us in this world; the full declaration of the whole contexture is reserved for the other world, to make up a part of good men's happiness in the amazing views of divine wisdom, as well as the other perfections of his nature. We can no more perfectly understand his wisdom, than we can his mercy and justice, till we see the last lines of all drawn, and the full expressions of them; we should therefore be sober and modest in the consideration of God's ways; *his judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out.* The riches of his wisdom are past our counting, his depths not to be fathomed, yet they are depths of righteousness and equity: though the full manifestation of that equity, the grounds and methods of his proceedings are unknown to us. As we are too short, fully to know God, so we are too ignorant fully to comprehend the acts of God; since he is a God of judgment, we should wait till we see the issue of his works, *Isa.* 30. 18. And in the mean time, with the apostle in the text, give him the glory of all, in the same expressions, *To the only wise God be glory, through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.*

THE

POWER OF GOD.

Job 26. 14.

LO, THESE ARE PARTS OF HIS WAYS, BUT HOW LITTLE A PORTION IS HEARD OF HIM? (BUT THE THUNDER OF HIS POWER WHO CAN UNDERSTAND?)

PART I.

THE INFINITE POWER OF GOD EXPRESSED IN HIS WORKS.

His power in the mighty waters—The grave—Hell—The power of God in the creation of the heavens—In the clouds—In the sea—In the heavenly bodies—The thunder of his power---His power shines in all his works---Immensity of his power.

BILDAD had in the foregoing chapter entertained Job with a discourse of the dominion and power of God, and the purity of his righteousness, whence he argues an impossibility of the justification of man in his presence, who is no better than a worm. Job in this chapter acknowledges the greatness of God's power, and descants more largely upon it than Bildad had done; but prefaces it with a kind of ironical speech, as if he had not acted a

friendly part, or spake little to the purpose, of the matter in hand; the subject of Job's discourse was the worldly happiness of the wicked, and the calamities of the godly; and Bildad reads him a lecture of the extent of God's dominion, the number of his armies, and the unspotted rectitude of his nature, in comparison of which the purest creatures are foul and crooked. Job, therefore, from ver. 1, to ver. 4, taxes him in a kind of scoffing manner, that he had not touched the point in hand. *How hast thou helped him that is without power? How savest thou the arm of him that hath no strength?* &c. ver. 2; your discourse is so impertinent, that it will neither strengthen a weak person, nor instruct a simple one.* But since Bildad would take up an argument of God's power and discourse so short of it, Job would shew that he wanted not his instructions in that kind, and that he had more distinct conceptions of it than his antagonist had uttered; And therefore from ver. 5, to the end of the chapter, he magnificently treats of the power of God in several branches.

Dead things are formed from under the waters, and the inhabitants thereof. You read me a lecture of the power of God in the heavenly host; indeed it is visible there, yet of a larger extent; and monuments of it are found in the lower parts. What do you think of those dead things under the earth and waters, of the corn that dies, and by the moistening influences of the clouds springs up again with a numerous increase for the nourishment of man? What do you think of those varieties of metals and minerals contained in the bowels of the earth; those pearls and riches in the depths of the waters, produced by this power of God? Add to these those more prodigious creatures in the sea, the inhabitants of the waters, with their vastness and variety, which are all the births of God's power; both in their first creation by his mighty voice, and their propagation by his cherishing providence.

Stop not here, but consider also that his power extends

* Munster.

to hell, and the graves, the repositories of all the crumbled dust that hath yet been in the world, *Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering*, ver. 6. The several lodgings of deceased men are known to him. No screen can obscure them from his sight, nor can their dissolution be any bar to his power, when the time is come to compact their mouldered bodies to entertain again their departed souls, either for bliss or woe. The grave, or hell, the place of punishment, *is naked before him;* as distinctly discerned by him as a naked body in all its lineaments by us, or a dissected body is in all its parts by a skilful eye. *Destruction hath no covering;* none can free himself from the power of his hand. Every person punished in hell is known to him, and feels the power of his wrath.

From the lower parts of the world he ascends to the consideration of the power of God in the creation of heaven and earth, *He stretches out the north over the empty places*, ver. 7. The north or the north-pole over the air, which by the Greeks was called *void* or *empty*, because of the tenuity and thinness of that element; and he mentions here the north, or north-pole, for the whole heaven, because it is more known and apparent than the southern-pole. *And hangs the earth upon nothing:* The massy and weighty earth hangs like a thick globe in the midst of a thin air, that there is as much air on the one side of it as on the other. The heavens have no prop to sustain them in their height, and the earth hath no basis to support it in its place. The heavens are as if you saw a curtain stretched smooth in the air without any hand to hold it; and the earth as if you saw a ball hanging in the air without any solid body to support it, or any line to hinder it from falling; both standing monuments of the omnipotence of God.

He then takes notice of his daily power in the clouds. *He binds up the waters in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them*, ver. 8. He compacts the waters together in clouds, and keeps them by his power in the air against the force of their natural gravity and heaviness, till they are fit to flow down upon the earth, and perform

his pleasure in the places for which he designs them. The cloud is not rent under them; the thin air is not split asunder by the weight of the waters contained in the cloud above it. He causes them to distil by drops, and strains them as it were through a thin lawn, for the refreshment of the earth; and suffers them not to fall with a violent torrent, to waste the industry of man, and bring famine upon the world, by destroying the fruits of the earth. What a wonder would it be to see but one entire drop of water hang itself but one inch above the ground, unless it be a bubble which is preserved by the air inclosed within it? What a wonder would it be to see a gallon of water contained in a thin cobweb as strongly as in a vessel of brass? Greater is the wonder of divine power in those thin bottles of heaven, as they are called, *Job* 38. 37; and therefore called his clouds here, as being daily instances of his omnipotence. That the air should sustain those rolling vessels, as it should seem, weightier than itself. That the force of this mass of waters should not break so thin a prison, and hasten to its proper place, which is below the air. That they should be daily confined against their natural inclination, and held by so slight a chain. That there should be such a gradual and successive falling of them, as if the air were pierced with holes like a gardener's watering-pot, and not fall in one intire body to drown or drench some parts of the earth. These are hourly miracles of divine power, as little regarded as they are clearly visible.

He proceeds, *He holds back the face of his throne, and spreads the cloud upon it*, ver. 9. The clouds are designed as curtains to cover the heavens, as well as vessels to *water the earth*, *Psal.* 147. 8. As a tapestry curtain between the heavens, the throne of God, and the earth his footstool, *Isa.* 66. 1. The heavens are called his throne, because his power most shines forth there, and magnificently declares the glory of God; and the clouds are as a screen between the scorching heat of the sun, and the tender plants of the earth, and the weak bodies of men.

From hence he descends to the sea, and considers the

divine power apparent in the bounding of it, ver. 10, *he hath compassed the waters with bounds, till the day and night come to an end.* This is several times mentioned in scripture, as a signal mark of divine strength, *Job* 38. 8. *Prov.* 8. 27. He hath measured a place for the sea, and struck the limits of it as with a compass, that it might not mount above the surface of the land, and ruin the ends of the earth's creation; and this while day and night have their mutual turns, till he shall make an end of time by removing the measures of it. The bounds of the tumultuous sea are in many places as weak as the bottles of the upper waters; the one is contained in thin air, and the other restrained by weak sands in many places, as well as by stubborn rocks in others; that though it swells, foams, roars, and the waves, encouraged and urged on by strong winds, come like mountains against the shore, they overflow it not, but humble themselves when they come near to those sands which are set as their limits, and retire back to their source, as if they were ashamed, and repented of their proud invasion: or else it may be meant of the tides of the sea, and the stated time set it for its ebbing and flowing, till night and day come to an end, * both that the fluid waters should contain themselves within due bounds, and keep their perpetual orderly motion, are amazing arguments of divine power.

He passes on to the consideration of the commotions in the air and earth, raised and stilled by the power of God, *the pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof.* By the pillars of heaven are not meant angels, as some think; but either the air called the pillars of heaven in regard of place, as it continues and knits together the parts of the world, as pillars do the upper and nether parts of a building. As the lowest parts of the earth are called the foundations of the earth; so the lowest parts of the heaven may be called the pillars of heaven.† Or else by that phrase may be meant mountains, which seem at a distance to touch the sky, as pillars do the top of a structure; and so it may be spoken accord-

* Coccei in loc. † Coccei.

ing to vulgar capacity, which imagines the heavens to be sustained by the two extreme parts of the earth, as a convex body, or to be arched by pillars; whence the scripture, according to common apprehensions, mentions *the ends of the earth*, and the *utmost parts of the heavens*, though they have properly no end, as being round. The power of God is seen in those commotions in the air and earth, by thunders, lightnings, storms, earthquakes, which rack the air, and make the mountains and hills tremble as servants before a frowning and rebuking master.

And as he makes motions in the earth and air, so is his power seen in their influences upon the sea; *he judges the sea with his power, and by his understanding smites through the proud*, ver. 12. At the creation he put the waters into several channels, and caused the dry land to appear for a habitation for man and beasts; or rather, he divides the sea by storms, as though he would make the bottom of the deep visible, and rakes up the sands to the surface of the waters, and marshals the waves into mountains and valleys. After that, he smites through the proud, that is, humbles the proud waves, and by allaying the storm reduceth them to their former level: the power of God is visible, as well in rebuking, as in awakening the winds; he makes them sensible of his voice, and according to his pleasure exasperates or calms them. The *striking through the proud* here, is not probably meant of the destruction of the Egyptian army; for some guess that Job died that year,* or about the time of the Israelites' coming out of Egypt; so that this discourse here being in the time of his affliction, could not point at that which was done after his restoration to his temporal prosperity.

And now at last he sums up the power of God in the chief of his works above, and the greatest wonder of his works below. *By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent*, &c. ver. 13. The greater and lesser lights, sun, moon, and stars, the ornaments and furniture of heaven; and the whale, a

* Drusius in loc.

prodigious monument of God's power, often mentioned in scripture to this purpose, and in particular in this book of Job, and called by the same name of crooked serpent, *Isa.* 27. 1, where it is applied by way of metaphor to the king of Assyria or Egypt, or all oppressors of the church. Various interpretations there are of this crooked serpent: Some understanding by it that constellation in heaven, which astronomers call the dragon; some that combination of weaker stars, which they call the galaxy, which winds about the heavens: but it is most probable that Job, drawing near to a conclusion of his discourse, joins the two greatest testimonies of God's power in the world, the highest heavens, and the lowest leviathan, which is here called a bar serpent * in regard of his strength and hardness, as mighty men are called bars in scripture, *Jer.* 51. 30. And in regard of this power of God in the creation of this creature, it is particularly mentioned in the catalogue of God's works; *and God created great whales, Gen.* 1. 21; all the other creatures being put into one sum, and not particularly expressed.

And now he makes use of this lecture in the text, *Lo, those are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?* This is but a small landscape of some of his works of power, the outsides and extremities of it; more glorious things are within his palaces: though those things argue a stupendous power of the Creator in his works of creation and providence, yet they are nothing to what may be declared of his power. And what may be declared, is nothing to what may be conceived; and what may be conceived, is nothing to what is above the conceptions of any creature. These are but little crumbs and fragments, of that infinite power which is in his nature, like a drop in comparison of the mighty ocean; a hiss or whisper, in comparison of a mighty voice of thunder. †

By the thunder of his power: some understand thunder literally, for material thunder in the air. *The thunder of his power*, that is according to the Hebrew dialect, *his powerful thunder.* But this is not the sense; the nature

* As the word signifies in the Hebrew. † Oecolamp.

of thunder in the air does not so much exceed the capacity of human understanding; it is therefore rather to be understood metaphorically, as the greatness and immensity of his power manifested in the magnificent miracles of nature, in the consideration whereof men are astonished, as if they had heard an unusual clap of thunder. So thunder is used, *Job* 39. 25. The thunder of the captains; that is, strength and force of the captains of an army. And ver. 19, God speaking to Job of a horse, saith, *hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?* that is, strength. And thunder being a mark of the power of God, some of the heathen have called God by the name of a thunderer.* As thunder pierceth the lowest places, and alters the state of things; so doth the power of God penetrate into all things whatsoever; the thunder of his power is the greatness of his power: as the *strength of salvation, Psal.* 20. 6, that is, a mighty salvation.

Who can understand? Who is able to count all the monuments of his power? How does this little, which I have spoken of, exceed the capacity of our understanding, and is rather the matter of our astonishment, than the object of our comprehensive knowledge? The power of the greatest potentate or the mightiest creature, is but of small extent: there are none but have their limits; it may be understood, how far they can act, in what sphere their activity is bounded: but when I have spoken all of divine power that I can; when you have thought all that you can think of it, your souls will prompt you to conceive something more, beyond what I have spoken, and what you have thought. His power shines in every thing, and is beyond every thing. There is infinitely more power lodged in his nature, not expressed to the world. The understanding of men and angels centered in one creature, would fall short of the

* The ancient Gauls worshipped him under the name of Taranis. The Greeks called Jupiter Βορνταιος and Thor: whence our Thursday is derived, signifieth Thunderer, a title the Germans gave their god. And Toran in the British language signifies Thunder. Voss. Idolo. lib. 2. cap. 33. Camb. Britan. p. 17.

perception of the infinity of it. All that can be comprehended of it, are but little fringes of it, a small portion. No man ever discoursed, or can discourse of God's power according to the magnificence of it. No creature can conceive it; God himself only comprehends it; God himself is only able to express it. Man's power being limited, his line is too short to measure the incomprehensible omnipotence of God.

The text is a lofty declaration of the divine power, with a particular note of attention. *Lo,* 1. in the expressions of it, in the works of creation and providence; *lo, these are his ways*; ways and works excelling any created strength, referring to the little summary of them he had made before. 2. In the insufficiency of these ways to measure his power; *but how little a portion is heard of him?* 3. In the incomprehensibleness of it; *the thunder of his power who can understand?*

Doctrine. Infinite and incomprehensible power pertains to the nature of God, and is expressed in part in his works: or, though there be a mighty expression of divine power in his works, yet an incomprehensible power pertains to his nature. *The thunder of his power, who can understand?*

His power shines in all his works, as well as his wisdom. *Twice have I heard this, that power belongs unto God, Psal.* 62. 11. In the law and in the prophets, say some; but why power twice, and not mercy, which he speaks of in the following verse? He had heard of power twice, from the voice of creation, and from the voice of government. Mercy was heard in government after man's fall, not in creation; innocent man was an object of God's goodness, not of his mercy till he made himself miserable; power was expressed in both; or *twice have I heard that power belongs to God,* that is, it is a certain and undoubted truth, that power is essential to the divine nature. It is true, mercy is essential, justice is essential; but power more apparently essential, because no acts of mercy, or justice, or wisdom, can be exercised by him without power; the repetition of a thing confirms the certainty

of it. Some observe, that God is called Almighty seventy times in scripture.* Though his power be evident in all his works, yet he hath a power beyond the expression of it in his works, which, as it is the glory of his nature, so it is the comfort of a believer. To which purpose the apostle expresses it by an excellent periphrasis for the honour of the divine nature; *Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, unto him be glory in the churches, Eph.* 3. 20. We have reason to acknowledge him Almighty, who hath a power of acting above our power of understanding. Who could have imagined such a powerful operation in the propagation of the gospel, and the conversion of the Gentiles, which the apostle seems to hint at in that place? His power is expressed by *horns in his hands, Hab.* 3. 4, because all the works of his hands are wrought with Almighty strength. Power is also used as a name of God; *The son of man sitting on the right hand of Power, Mark* 14. 62, that is, at the right hand of God; God and power are so inseparable that they are reciprocated. As his essence is immense not to be confined in place, as it is eternal, not to be measured by time; so it is almighty, not to be limited in regard of action.

1. It is ingeniously illustrated by some by a *unit* †; all numbers depend upon it, it makes numbers by addition, multiplies them inexpressibly; when one unit is removed from a number, how vastly does it diminish it? It gives perfection to all other numbers, it receives perfection from none. If you add a unit before 100, how doth it multiply it to 1100? If you set a unit before twenty millions, it presently makes the number swell up to an hundred and twenty millions; and so powerful is a unit by adding it to numbers, that it will infinitely enlarge them to such a vastness, that shall transcend the capacity of the best arithmetician to count them. By such a meditation as this, you may have some prospect of the power of that

* Lessius de perfect. Divin. lib. 5. cap. 1.

† Fotherby, Atheomastic. p. 306, 307.

God who is only unity; the beginning of all things, as a unit is the beginning of all numbers; and can perform as many things really, as a unit can numerically, that is, can do as much in the making of creatures, as a unit can do in the multiplying of numbers. The omnipotence of God was scarce denied by any heathen, that did not deny the being of a God, and that was Pliny, and that upon weak arguments.

2. Indeed we can have no conception of God, if we conceive him not most powerful, as well as most wise. He is not a God, that cannot do what he will, and perform all his pleasure. If we imagine him restrained in his power, we imagine him limited in his essence. As he hath an infinite knowledge to know what is possible, he cannot be without an infinite power to do what is possible. As he hath a will to resolve what he sees good, so he cannot want a power to effect what he sees good to decree. As the essence of a creature cannot be conceived without that activity that belongs to his nature; as when you conceive fire, you cannot conceive it without a power of burning and warming; and when you conceive water, you cannot conceive it without a power of moistening and cleansing; so you cannot conceive an infinite essence without an infinite power of activity. Hence, a heathen could say, "If you know God, you know he can do all things," and therefore saith Austin, "Give me not only a christian but a Jew, not only a Jew but a heathen, that will deny God to be Almighty." A Jew, a heathen may deny Christ to be omnipotent, but no heathen will deny God to be omnipotent, and no devil will deny either to be so. God cannot be conceived without some power, for then he must be conceived without action; whose then are those products and effects of power which are visible to us in the world? to whom do they belong? who is the father of them? God cannot be conceived without power suitable to his nature and essence; if we imagine him to be of an infinite essence, we must imagine him to be of an infinite power and strength.

But I shall shew more particularly,

1. The nature of God's power. 2. Reasons to prove that God must needs be powerful. 3. How his power appears; in creation, in government, in redemption. 4. The improvement.

PART II.

THE NATURE OF JEHOVAH'S POWER.

Power often signifies authority---Is absolute and ordinate ---His power brings to pass whatsoever he wills---Distinct from his wisdom and will---Gives activity to all his perfections---Essential to his nature---Is infinite--- As his essence---Its objects---In action---In duration--- Low things impossible with God.

WE are to consider FIRST, what this power is; or the *nature* of it.

1. Power sometimes signifies *authority;* and a man is said to be mighty and powerful in regard of his dominion, and the right he hath to command multitudes of other persons to take his part; but power taken for strength, and power taken for authority, are distinct things, and may be separated from one another; power may be without authority, as in successful invasions that have no just foundation; authority may be without power, as in a just prince, expelled by an unjust rebellion; the authority resides in him, though he be over-

powered, and is destitute of strength to support and exercise that authority. The power of God is not to be understood of his authority and dominion, but his strength to act, and the word in the text properly signifies strength.

This power is divided ordinarily into *absolute* and *ordinate*. *Absolute*, is that power whereby God is able to do that which he will not do, but is possible to be done. *Ordinate*, is that power whereby God does that which he hath decreed to do, that is, which he hath ordained or appointed to be exercised.* Which are not distinct powers, but one and the same power; his ordinate power is a part of his absolute; for if he had not a power to do every thing that he could will, he might not have a power to do every thing that he does will.

The object of his *absolute* power is all things possible; such things that imply not a contradiction, such as are not repugnant in their own nature to be done: and such as are not contrary to the nature and perfections of God to be done: those things that are repugnant in their own nature to be done are several; as to make a thing which is past not to be past. As for example, the world is created; God could have chosen whether he would create the world, and after it is created he hath power to dissolve it; but after it was created, and when it is dissolved, it will be eternally true, that the world was created, and that it was dissolved; for it is impossible, that that which was once true, should ever be false: if it be true that the world was created, it will for ever be true that it was created, and cannot be otherwise. And also, if it be once true that God hath decreed, it is impossible in its own nature to be true that God hath not decreed. Some things are repugnant to the nature and perfections of God: as it is impossible for his nature to die and perish; impossible for him in regard of truth, to lie and deceive. But of this hereafter; we only aim at present to understand the object of God's absolute power to be things possible, that is, possible in nature, not by any strength

* Scaliger, Publ. exercit. 365. § 8.

in themselves, or of themselves; for nothing hath no strength, and every thing is nothing before it comes into being:* so God by his absolute power might have prevented the sin of the fallen angels, and so have preserved them in their first habitation. He might by his absolute power have restrained the devil from tempting of Eve, or restrained her and Adam from swallowing the bait, and joining hands with the temptation. By his absolute power, God might have given the reins to Peter to betray his master as well as to deny him; and employed Judas in the same glorious and successful service wherein he employed Paul. By his absolute power he might have created the world millions of years before he did create it, and can reduce it into its empty nothing this moment. This the Baptist affirms, when he tells us, that *God is able of these stones* (meaning the stones in the wilderness, and not the people which came out to him out of Judea, which were children of Abraham) *to raise up children to Abraham, Matt. 3. 9,* that is, there is a possibility of such a thing, there is no contradiction in it, but that God is able to do it if he please.

But now the object of his *ordinate* power, is all things ordained by him to be done, all things decreed by him; and because of the divine ordination of things this power is called *ordinate;* and what is thus ordained by him he cannot but do, because of his unchangeableness. Both those powers are expressed, *My Father can send twelve legions of angels, Matt. 26. 53, 54*; there is his absolute power: *but how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?* there is his ordinate power. As his power is free from any act of his will, it is called absolute; as it is joined with an act of his will, it is called ordinate. His absolute power is necessary, and belongs to his nature; his ordinate power is free, and belongs to his will; a power guided by his will; not, as I said before, that they are two distinct powers, both belonging to his nature, but the

* Estius in Sent. lib. 1. dist. 43. § 2.

latter is the same with the former, only it is guided by his will and wisdom.

3. It follows then, that the power of God is that ability and strength, whereby he can bring to pass *whatsoever he please.* Whatsoever his infinite wisdom can direct, and whatsoever the infinite purity of his will can resolve. *Power*, in the primary notion of it, does not signify an act, but an ability to bring a thing into act; it is power, as able to act before it doth actually produce a thing: as God had an ability to create before he did create, he had power before he acted that power without. Power notes the principle of the action, and therefore is greater than the act itself. Power exercised and diffused, in bringing forth and nursing up its particular objects without, is inconceivably less than that strength which is infinite in himself, the same with his essence, and is indeed himself: by his power exercised he does whatsoever he actually wills; but by the power in his nature, he is able to do whatsoever he is able to will. The will of creatures may be, and is more extensive than their power; and their power more contracted and shortened, than their will: but, *his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure, Isa.* 46. 10. His power is as great as his will, that is, whatsoever can fall within the verge of his will, falls within the compass of his power. Though he will never actually will this or that, yet supposing he should will it, he is able to perform it: so that you must in your notion of divine power, enlarge it further than to think, God can only do what he hath resolved to do; but that he hath as infinite a capacity of power to act, as he hath an infinite capacity of will to resolve.

Besides, this power is of that nature, that he can do whatsoever he pleases without difficulty, without resistance, it cannot be checked, restrained, frustrated.* As he can do all things possible in regard of the object, he can do all things easily in regard of the manner of acting: what in human artificers is knowledge, labour, industry,

* Cra. Syntag. lib. 3. cap. 7. p. 611.

that in God is his will; his will works without labour, his works stand forth as he wills them. Hands and arms are ascribed to him for our conceptions, because our power of acting is distinct from our will; but God's power of acting is not really distinct from his will; it is sufficient to the existence of a thing, that God wills it to exist; he can act what he will only by his will, without any instruments. He needs no matter to work upon, because he can make something from nothing; all matter owes itself to his creative power; he needs no time to work in, for he can make time when he pleases to begin to work; he needs no copy to work by, himself is his own pattern and copy in his works. All created agents want matter to work upon, instruments to work with, copies to work by; time to bring either the births of their minds, or the works of their hands to perfection: but the power of God needs none of these things, but is of a vast and incomprehensible nature, beyond all these. As nothing can be done without the compass of it, so itself is without the compass of every created understanding.

4. This power is of a *distinct* conception from the *wisdom* and *will* of God. They are not really distinct, but according to our conceptions. We cannot discourse of divine things without observing some proportion of them with human, ascribing unto God the perfections sifted from the imperfections of our nature. In us there are three orders, of understanding, will, power; and accordingly three acts, counsel, resolution, execution, which, though they are distinct in us, are not really distinct in God. In our conceptions, the apprehensions of a thing belongs to the understanding of God; determination to the will of God; direction to the wisdom of God; execution to the power of God. The knowledge of God regards a thing as possible, and as it may be done; the wisdom of God regards a thing as fit, and convenient to be done; the will of God resolves that it shall be done; the power of God is the application of his will, to effect what it hath resolved. Wisdom is a fixing the being of things, the measures and perfections of their several beings; power is a conferring those perfections and beings

upon them. His power is his ability to act, and his wisdom is the director of his action: his will orders, his wisdom guides, and his power effects. His will as the spring, and his power as the worker, are expressed, *He hath done whatsoever he pleased*, *Psal*, 115. 3; *He commanded, and they were created*, *Psal.* 140. 5; and all three are expressed, *Who works all things according to the counsel of his own will*, *Eph.* 1. 11. So that the power of God is a perfection subordinate to his understanding and will, to execute the results of his wisdom and the orders of his will; to his wisdom, as directing, because he works skilfully; to his will, as moving and applying, because he works voluntarily and freely. The exercise of his power depends upon his will: his will is the supreme cause of every thing that exists in time, and all things receive a being as he wills them. His power is but will perpetually working, and diffusing itself in the season his will hath fixed from eternity; it is his eternal will in perpetual and successive springs and streams in the creatures; it is nothing but the constant efficacy of his omnipotent will. This must be understood of his ordinate power; but his absolute power is larger than his resolving will; for though the scripture tells us, *He hath done whatsoever he will;* yet it tells us not, that he hath done whatsoever he could; he can do things that he will never do.

Again, his power is distinguished from his will, in regard of the exercise of it, which is after the act of his will: his will was conversant about objects, when his power was not exercised about them. Creatures were the objects of his will from eternity, but they were not from eternity the effects of his power. His purpose to create was from eternity, but the execution of his purpose was in time. Now this execution of his will we call his ordinate power: his wisdom and his will are supposed antecedent to his power, as the counsel and resolve, as the cause precedes the performance of the purpose, as the effect. * Some distinguish his power from his understanding and will, in regard that his understanding and

* Gamacheus.

will are larger than his absolute power; for God understands sins, and wills to permit them, but he cannot himself do any evil or unjust action, nor have a power of doing it. But this is not to distinguish that divine power, but impotence; for to be unable to do evil is the perfection of power; and to be able to do things unjust and evil, is a weakness, imperfection, and inability. Man indeed wills many things that he is not able to perform, and understands many things that he is not able to effect; he understands much of the creatures, something of the sun, moon, and stars; he can conceive many suns, many moons, yet is not able to create the least atom: but there is nothing that belongs to power but God understands, and is able to effect. To sum this up, the will of God is the root of all, the wisdom of God is the copy of all, and the power of God is the framer of all.

5. The power of God gives *activity to all the other perfections of his nature*, and is of a larger extent and efficacy, in regard of its objects, than some perfections of his nature. I put them both together.

It contributes life and activity to all the other perfections of his nature. How vain would be his eternal counsels, if power did not step in to execute them? His mercy would be a feeble pity if he were destitute of power to relieve; and his justice a slighted scare-crow, without power to punish; his promises an empty sound, without power to accomplish them. As holiness is the beauty, so power is the life of all his attributes in their exercise; and as holiness, so power is an adjunct belonging to all, a term that may be given to all. God hath a powerful wisdom to attain his ends, without interruption. He hath a powerful mercy to remove our misery; a powerful justice to lay all misery upon offenders; he hath a powerful truth to perform his promises; an infinite power to bestow rewards and inflict penalties. It is to this purpose power is first put in the two things which the psalmist had heard, *Twice have I heard, Psal.* 62. 11, 12, or two things have I heard; first power, then mercy and justice, included in that expression, *Thou renderest to every man according to his work.* In every perfection of God he

heard of power. This is the arm, the hand of the Deity, which all his other attributes lay hold on, when they would appear in their glory; this hands them to the world; by this they act, in this they triumph. Power framed every stage for their appearance in creation, providence, redemption.

It is of a larger extent in regard of its *objects*, than some other attributes. Power does not always suppose an object, but constitutes an object. It supposeth an object in the act of preservation, but it makes an object in the act of creation; but mercy supposeth an object miserable, yet doth not make it so; justice supposes an object criminal, but doth not constitute it so. Mercy supposes him miserable, to relieve him; justice supposes him criminal, to punish him; but power supposes not a thing in real existence, but as possible; or rather, it is from power that any thing hath a possibility, if there be no repugnancy in the nature of the thing.

Again, power *extends further* than either mercy or justice. Mercy hath particular objects, which justice shall not at last be willing to punish; and justice hath particular objects, which mercy at last shall not be willing to refresh; but power doth, and always will extend to the objects of both mercy and justice. A creature, as a creature, is neither the object of mercy nor justice, nor of rewarding goodness. A creature, as innocent, is the object of rewarding goodness; a creature as miserable, is the object of compassionate mercy; a creature, as criminal, is the object of revenging justice: but all of them the objects of power, in conjunction with those attributes of goodness, mercy, and justice, to which they belong. All the objects that mercy, and justice, and truth, and wisdom, exercise themselves about, have a possibility and an actual being from this perfection of divine power. It is power first frames a creature in a capacity of nature for mercy or justice, though it does not give an immediate qualification for the exercise of either. Power makes man a rational creature, and so confers upon him a nature mutable, which may be miserable by its own fault, and punishable by God's justice; or pitiable by his compassion, and relievable by his mercy:

but it doth not make him sinful, whereby he becomes miserable and punishable.

Again, power runs through all the degrees of the states of a creature. As a thing is possible, or may be made, it is the object of absolute power; as it is *factibile*, or ordered to be made, it is the object of ordinate power: as a thing is actually made, and brought into being, it is the object of preserving power. So that power does stretch out its arms to all the works of God, in all their circumstances, and at all times. When mercy ceases to relieve a creature, when justice ceases to punish a creature, power ceases not to preserve a creature. The blessed in heaven, that are out of the reach of punishing justice, are for ever maintained by power in that blessed condition: the damned in hell, that are cast out of the bosom of intreating mercy, are for ever sustained in those remediless torments by the arm of power.

6. This power is originally and essentially in the nature of God, and not distinct from his essence. It is *originally* and *essentially* in God. The strength and power of great kings is originally in their people, and managed and ordered by the authority of the prince for the common good. Though a prince hath authority in his person to command, yet he hath not sufficient strength in his person, without the assistance of others, to make his commands to be obeyed. He hath not a single strength in his own person to conquer countries and kingdoms, and increase the number of his subjects. He must make use of the arms of his own subjects, to overrun other places, and, yoke them under his dominion. But the power of all things that ever were, are, or shall be, is originally and essentially in God. It is not derived from any thing without him, as the power of the greatest potentates in the world is: Therefore it is said, *Power belongs unto God*, *Ps.* 62. 11, that is, solely, and to none else. He hath a power to make his subjects, and as many as he pleases; to create worlds, to enjoin precepts, to execute penalties, without calling in the strength of his creatures to his aid. The strength that the subjects of a mor-

tal prince have, is not derived to them from the prince, though the exercise of it for this or that end, is ordered and directed by the authority of the prince: but what strength soever any thing hath to act as a means, it hath from the power of God as Creator, as well as whatsoever authority it hath to act is from God, as rector and governor of the world. God hath a strength to act without means, and no means can act any thing without his power and strength communicated to them. As the clouds in the verse before the text, are called God's clouds; so all the strength of creatures may be called, and truly is, God's strength and power in them; a drop of power from heaven, originally only in God. Creatures have but a little mite of power; somewhat communicated to them, somewhat kept and reserved from them, of what they are capable to possess. They have limited natures, and therefore a limited sphere of activity. Clothes can warm us, but not feed us; bread can nourish us, but not clothe us. One plant hath a medicinal quality against one disease, another against another; but God is the possessor of universal power, the common exchequer of this mighty treasure. He acts by creatures, as not needing their power, but deriving power to them: what he acts by them, he could act himself without them: and what they act as from themselves, is derived to them from him, through invisible channels. And hence it will follow, that because power is essentially in God, more operations of God are possible than are exerted.

And as power is essentially in God, so it is not *distinct from his essence.* It belongs to God in regard of the unconceivable excellency and activity of his essence*. And omnipotence is nothing but the divine essence efficacious *ad extra.* It is his essence as operative, and the immediate principle of operation: as the power of enlightening in the sun, and the power of heating in the fire, are not things distinct from the nature of them; but the nature of the sun bringing forth light, and the nature of the fire bringing forth heat. The power of acting is the

* Ratione summæ actualitatis essentiæ. Suarez, vol. 1. p. 150, 151.

same with the substance of God, though the action from that power be terminated in the creature. If the power of God were distinct from his essence, he were then compounded of substance and power, and would not be the most simple being. As when the understanding is informed in several parts of knowledge; it is skilled in the government of cities and countries, it knows this or that art: it learns mathematics, philosophy; this or that science. The understanding hath a power to do this; but this power, whereby it learns those excellent things, and brings forth excellent births, is not a thing distinct from the understanding itself; we may rather call it the understanding powerful, than the power of the understanding; and so we may rather say, God powerful, than say, the power of God; because his power is not distinct from his essence.

From both these it will follow, that this omnipotence is incommunicable to any creature; no creature can inherit it, because it is a contradiction for any creature to have the essence of God. This omnipotence is a peculiar right of God, wherein no creature can share with him. To be omnipotent is to be essentially God. And for a creature to be omnipotent, is for a creature to be its own creator. It being therefore the same with the essence of the godhead, it cannot be communicated to the humanity of Christ, as the Lutherans say it is, without the communication of the essence of the godhead; for then the humanity of Christ would not be humanity but deity. If omnipotence were communicated to the humanity of Christ, the essence of God were also communicated to his humanity, and then eternity would be communicated. His humanity then was not given him in time, his humanity would be uncompounded, that is, his body would be no body, his soul no soul. Omnipotence is essentially in God: it is not distinct from the essence of God, it is his essence, omnipotent, able to do all things.

7. Hence it follows, that this power is *infinite. What is the exceeding greatness of his power*, &c. *according to the working of his mighty power*, *Eph.* 1. 19. God were not omnipotent, unless his power were infinite; for a finite power is a limited power, and a limited power

cannot effect every thing that is possible. Nothing can be too difficult for the divine power to effect: he hath a fulness of power, an exceeding strength, above all human capacities; it is a *mighty power*, *Eph.* 1. 19. *Able to do above all that we can ask or think*, *Eph.* 3. 20. That which he acts is above the power of any creature to act. Infinite power consists in the bringing things forth from nothing. No creature can imitate God in this prerogative of power. Man indeed can carve various forms, and erect various pieces of art, but from pre-existent matter. Every artificer hath the matter brought to his hand, he only brings it forth in a new figure. Chymists separate one thing from another, but create nothing, but sever those things which were before formed and compacted together: but when God speaks a powerful word, nothing begins to be something: things stand forth from nothing, obey his mighty command, and take what forms he is pleased to give them. The creating one thing, though never so small and minute, as the least fly, cannot be but by an infinite power; much less can the producing of such variety we see in the world. His power is infinite, it cannot be resisted by any thing that he hath made; nor can it be confined by any thing he can will to make. *His greatness is unsearchable*, *Psal.* 145. 3. It is a greatness, not of quantity, but quality. The greatness of his power hath no end; it is a vanity to imagine any limits can be affixed to it, or that any creature can say, hitherto it can go, and no further. It is above all conception, all inquisition of any created understanding. No creature ever had, nor ever can have that strength of wit and understanding, to conceive the extent of his power, and how magnificently he can work.

1. His *essence* is infinite. As in a finite subject there is a finite virtue: so in an infinite subject there must be an infinite virtue. Where the essence is limited the power is so:* where the essence is unlimited, the power knows no bounds.† Among creatures, the more excellency of being and form

* Operationes sequuntur essentiam. † Aquin. par. 1. Qu. 25. Artic. 2.

any thing hath, the more activity, vigour, and power it hath, to work according to its nature. The sun hath a mighty power to warm, enlighten, and fructify, above what the stars have; because it hath a vaster body, more intense degrees of light, heat, and vigour. Now, if we conceive the sun made much greater than it is, it would proportionably have greater degrees of power to heat and enlighten than it hath now: and were it possible to have an infinite heat and light, it would infinitely heat and enlighten other things; for every thing is able to act according to the measures of its being: therefore, since the essence of God is unquestionably infinite, his power of acting must be so also. His power is one and the same with his essence: and though the knowledge of God extends to more objects than his power, because he knows all evils of sin, which because of his holiness he cannot commit; yet it is as infinite as his knowledge, because it is as much one with his essence, as his knowledge and wisdom is: for as the wisdom or knowledge of God is nothing but the essence of God, knowing; so the power of God is nothing but the essence of God, able.

2. The *objects* of divine power are *innumerable.* The objects of divine power are not essentially infinite; and therefore we must not measure the infiniteness of divine power by an ability to make an infinite being; because there is an incapacity in any created thing to be infinite; for to be a creature and to be infinite; to be infinite and yet made, is a contradiction. To be infinite, and to be God, is one and the same thing. Nothing can be infinite but God; nothing but God is infinite. But the power of God is infinite, because it can produce infinite effects, or innumerable things, such as surpass the arithmetic of a creature; nor yet doth this infinity consist simply in producing innumerable effects; for that a finite cause can produce. Fire can by its finite and limited heat, burn numberless combustible things; and the understanding of man hath an infinite number of thoughts and acts of intellection, and thoughts different from one another. Who can number the imaginations of his fancy, and thoughts of his mind for the space of one month or year? much less of forty

or an hundred years; yet all these thoughts are about things that are in being, or have a foundation in things that are in being. But the infinity of God's power consists in an ability to produce infinite effects, formally distinct, and diverse from one another; such as never had being, such as the mind of man cannot conceive: *able to do above what we can think*, and whatsoever God hath made, or is able to make, he is able to make in an infinite manner, by calling them to stand forth from nothing. To produce innumerable effects of distinct natures, and from so distant a term as nothing, is an argument of infinite power.

Now, that the objects of Divine Power are innumerable appears, because God can can do infinitely more than he hath done, or will do. Nothing that God hath done can enfeeble his power; there still resides in him an ability beyond all the settled contrivances of his understanding, and resolves of his will, which no effects which he hath wrought can drain, and put to a stand. As he can raise stones to be children to Abraham; so with the same mighty word whereby he made one world, he can make infinite numbers of worlds, to be the monuments of his glory. After the prophet Jeremiah, chap. 32. 17, had spoke of God's power in creation, he adds, *And nothing is too hard for thee*, ver. 19. For one world that he hath made, he can create millions: for one star, with which he hath beautified the heavens, he could have garnished it with a thousand, and multiplied, if he had pleased, every one of those into millions, for *he can call things that are not;* not some things, but all things possible. The barren womb of nothing can no more resist his power now to educe a world from it, than it could at first: no doubt, but for one angel which he hath made, he could make many worlds of angels. He that made one with so much ease, as by a word, cannot want power to make many more, till he wants a word. The word that was not too weak to make one, cannot be too weak to make multitudes. If from one man he hath in a way of nature, multiplied so many in all ages of the world, and covered with them the whole face of the

earth; he could in a supernatural way, by one word multiply as many more. It is *the breath of the Almighty that gives life, Job* 33. 4. He can create infinite species and kinds of creatures more than he hath created, more variety of forms: for since there is no searching of his greatness, there is no conceiving the numberless possible effects of his power. The understanding of man can conceive numberless things possible to be, more than have been or shall be. And shall we imagine, that the finite understanding of a creature hath a greater omnipotency to conceive things possible than God hath to produce things possible? When the understanding of man is tired in its conceptions, it must still be concluded, that the power of God extends, not only to what can be conceived, but infinitely beyond the measures of a finite faculty, *Touching the Almighty we cannot find him out, he is excellent in power and in judgment, Job* 36, 23. For the understanding of man, in its conceptions of more kind of creatures, is limited to those creatures which are. It cannot, in its own imagination, conceive any thing, but what hath some foundation in and from something already in being. It may frame a new kind of creature, made up of a lion, a horse, and an ox; but all those parts whereof its conception is made, have distinct beings in the world, though not in that composition as his mind mixes and joins them: but no question but God can create creatures that have no resemblance with any kind of creatures yet in being. It is certain, that if God only knows those things which he hath done, and will do, and not all things possible to be done by him, his knowledge were finite; so if he could do no more than what he hath done, his power would be finite.

Creatures have a power to act about *more objects than they do.* The understanding of man can frame from one principle of truth many conclusions and inferences more than it does. Why cannot then the power of God frame from one first matter, an infinite number of creatures more than have been created? The almightiness of God in producing real effects, is not inferior to the understanding of man in drawing out real truths. An artificer that

makes a watch, supposing his life and health, can make many more of a different form and motion: and an artist can draw many draughts, and frame many pictures with a new variety of colours, according to the richness of his fancy. If these can do so, that require a pre-existent matter framed to their hands, God can much more, who can raise beautiful structures from nothing. As long as men have matter, they can diversify the matter, and make new figures from it: so long as there is nothing, God can produce out of that nothing whatsoever he pleases.

We see the same in inanimate creatures. A spark of fire hath a vast power in it; it will kindle other things, increase and enlarge itself: nothing can be exempt from the active force of it: it will alter by consuming or refining whatsoever you offer to it: it will reach all, and refuse none; and by the efficacious power of it, all those new figures which we see in metals, are brought forth: when you have exposed to it a multitude of things, still add more, it will exert the same strength; yea, the vigour is increased rather than diminished. The more it catcheth, the more fiercely and irresistibly it will act; you cannot suppose an end of its operation, or a decrease of its strength, as long as you can conceive its duration and continuance: this must be but a weak shadow of that infinite power which is in God. Take another instance in the sun: it hath power every year to produce flowers and plants from the earth; and is as able to produce them now, as it was at the first lighting it and rearing it in the sphere wherein it moves. And if there were no kind of flowers and plants now created, the sun hath a power residing in it since its first creation, to afford the same warmth to them for the nourishing and bringing them forth. Whatsoever you can conceive the sun to be able to do in regard of plants, that can God do in regard to worlds; produce more worlds than the sun doth plants every year, without weariness, without languishment. The sun is able to influence more things than it does, and produce numberless effects; but it does not do so much as it is able to do, because it wants matter to work upon:

God therefore who wants no matter, can do much more than he doth; he can either act by second causes if there were more, or make more second causes if he pleased.

God is the most *free agent*. Every free agent can do more than he will do. Man being a free creature, can do more than ordinarily he wills to do. God is most free, as being the spring of liberty in other creatures: he acts not by a necessity of nature; as the waves of the sea, or the motions of the wind; and therefore is not determined to those things which he hath already called forth into the world. If God be infinitely wise in contrivance, he could contrive more than he hath, and therefore can effect more than he hath effected. He doth not act to the extent of his power upon all occasions. It is according to his will that he works, *Eph.* 1. 5. It is not according to his work that he wills; his work is an evidence of his will, but not the rule of his will. His power is not the rule of his will, but his will is the disposer of his power, according to the light of his infinite wisdom, and other attributes that direct his will; and therefore his power is not to be measured by his actual will. No doubt but he could in a moment have produced that world which he took six days time to frame: he could have drowned the old world at once, without prolonging the time till the revolution of forty days: he was not limited to such a term of time by any weakness, but by the determination of his own will. God doth not do the hundred thousandth part of what he is able to do, but what is convenient to do, according to the end which he hath proposed to himself. Jesus Christ, as man, could have asked legions of angels, and God, as a sovereign, could have sent them, *Mat.* 26. 53. God could raise the dead every day if he pleased, but he doth not: he could heal every diseased person in a moment, but he does not: as God can will more than he actually wills, so he can do more than he hath actually done: he can do whatsoever he can will, he can will more worlds, and therefore can create more worlds. If God hath not ability to do more than he will do, he then can do no more than what he actually hath done; and then it will follow,

that he is not a free, but a natural and necessary agent, which cannot be supposed of God.

3. This power is infinite in regard of action. As he can produce numberless objects above what he hath produced, so he could produce them more magnificently than he hath made them. As he never works to the extent of his power in regard of things, so neither in regard of the manner of acting; for he never acts so, but he could act in a higher and more perfect manner.

His power is infinite in regard of the *independency of action:* He wants no instrument to act. When there was nothing but God, there was no cause of action but God: When there was nothing in being but God, there could be no instrumental cause of the being of any thing. God can perfect his action without dependence on any thing *; and to be simply independent, is to be simply infinite. In this respect it is a power incommunicable to any creature, though you conceive a creature in higher degrees of perfection than it is. A creature cannot cease to be dependent, but it must cease to be a creature; to be a creature and independent, are terms repugnant to one another.

But the infiniteness of divine power consists in an ability to give *higher degrees of perfection* to every thing which he hath made. † As his power is infinite *extensive,* in regard of the multitude of objects he can bring into being; so it is infinite *intensive,* in regard of the manner of operation, and the endowments he can bestow upon them. Some things indeed God does so perfectly, that higher degrees of perfection cannot be imagined to be added to them. ‡ As the humanity of Christ cannot be united more gloriously than to the person of the Son of God; a greater degree of perfection cannot be conferred upon it. Nor can the souls of the blessed have a nobler object of vision and fruition than God himself, the infinite Being; no higher than the enjoyment of himself can be conferred upon a creature, *respectu termini.* This is not want of power; he cannot be greater because he

* Suarez. vol. 1. de Deo. p. 151.

† Becan. Sum. Theol. p. 82. ‡ Becan. Sum. Theol. p. 84.

is greatest, nor better because he is best; nothing can be more than infinite. But as to the things which God hath made in the world, he could have given them other manner of beings than they have. A human understanding may improve a thought or conclusion; strengthen it with more and more force of reason, and adorn it with richer and richer elegancy of language; why then may not the divine providence produce a world more perfect and excellent than this? He that makes a plain vessel, can embellish it more, engrave more figures upon it, according to the capacity of the subject; and cannot God do so much more with his works? Could not God have made this world of a larger quantity, and the sun of a greater bulk and proportionable strength to influence a greater world? so that this world would have been to another that God might have made, as a ball or a mount, this sun as a star to another sun that he might have kindled. He could have made every star a sun, every spire of grass a star, every grain of dust a flower, every soul an angel. And though the angels be perfect creatures, and inexpressibly more glorious than a visible creature; yet who can imagine God so confined, that he cannot create a more excellent kind, and endow those which he hath made with excellency of a higher rank than he invested them with at the first moment of their creation? Without question God might have given the meaner creatures more excellent endowments, put them into another order of nature for their own good, and more diffusive usefulness in the world. What is said by the prophet in another case, may be said in this, *Yet had he a residue of Spirit, Mal.* 2. 15. The capacity of every creature might have been enlarged by God; for no work of his in the world equals his power, as nothing that he hath framed equals his wisdom. The same matter which is the matter of the body of a beast, is the matter of a plant and flower; is the matter of the body of a man; and so was capable of a higher form and higher perfections, than God hath been pleased to bestow upon it. And he had power to bestow that perfection on one part of matter which he denied to it, and bestow-

ed on another part. If God cannot make things in greater perfection, there must be some limitation of him: he cannot be limited by another, because nothing is superior to God. If limited by himself, that limitation is not from a want of power, but a want of will. He can by his own power raise stones to be children to Abraham. *Mat.* 3. 9. He could alter the nature of the stones, form them into human bodies, dignify them with rational souls, inspire those souls with such graces that may render them the children of Abraham. But for the more fully understanding the nature of this power we may observe,

That though God can make every thing with a higher degree of perfection, yet still *within the limits of a finite being*. No creature can be made infinite, because no creature can be made God. No creature can be so improved, as to equal the goodness and perfection of God*; yet there is no creature, but we may conceive a possibility of its being made more perfect in that rank of a creature than it is: as we may imagine a flower or plant to have greater beauty and richer qualities imparted to it by divine power, without rearing it so high as to the dignity of a rational or sensitive creature. Whatsoever perfections may be added by God to a creature, are still finite perfections; and a multitude of finite excellencies can never amount to the value and honour of infinite: as if you add one number to another as high as you can, as much as a large piece of paper can contain, you can never make the numbers really infinite, though they may be infinite in regard of the inability of any human understanding to count them. The finite condition of the creature suffers it not to be capable of an infinite perfection. God is so great, so excellent, that it is his perfection not to have any equal; the defect is in the creature, which cannot be elevated to such a pitch; as you can never make a gallon measure hold the quantity of a butt, or a butt the quantity of a river, or a river the fulness of the sea.

Again, though God hath a power to furnish every

* Gamach in Aquin. tom. 1. qu. 25.

creature with greater and nobler perfections than he hath bestowed upon it, yet *he hath framed all things, in the most perfect manner*, and most convenient to that end for which he intended them. Every thing is endowed with the best nature and quality suitable to God's end in creation, though not in the best manner for itself *. In regard of the universal end, there cannot be a better; for God himself is the end of all things, who is the supreme goodness. Nothing can be better than God, who could not be God if he were not superlatively best or *optimus*; and he hath ordered all things for the declaration of his goodness or justice according to the behaviour of his creatures. Man does not consider what strength or power he can put forth in the means he useth to attain such an end, but the suitableness of them to his main design, and so fits and marshals them to his grand purpose. Had God only created things that are most excellent, he had created only angels and men; how then would his wisdom have been conspicuous in other works in the subordination and subserviency of them to one another? God therefore determined his power by his wisdom: † And though his absolute power could have made every creature better, yet his ordinate power, which in every step was regulated by his wisdom, made every thing best for his designed intention. A musician hath power to wind up a string on a lute to a higher and more perfect note in itself, but in wisdom he will not do it, because the intended melody should be disturbed thereby, if it were not suited to the other strings on the instrument; discord would mar and taint the harmony which the musician designed. God in creation observed the proportions of nature: he can make a spider as strong as a lion; but according to the order of nature which he hath settled, it is not convenient that a creature of so small a compass, should be as strong as one of a greater bulk. The absolute power of God could have prepared a body for Christ as glorious as that he had after his resurrection; but that

* Best ex parte facientis & modi, but not ex parte rei. Esti. in Senten. lib. 1. distin. 44. § 2.

† Aquin. part 1, qn. 25. artic.

had not been agreeable to the end designed in his humiliation: and therefore God acted most perfectly by his ordinate power, in giving him a body that wore the livery of our infirmities. God's power is always regulated by his wisdom and will, and though it produces not what is most perfect in itself, yet what is most perfect and decent in relation to the end he fixed. And so in his Providence, though he could rack the whole frame of nature to bring about his ends in a more miraculous way and astonishment to mortals; yet his power is usually and ordinarily confined by his will to act in concurrence with the nature of the creatures, and direct them according to the laws of their being, to such ends which he aims at in their conduct, without doing violence to their nature.

Finally, Though God hath an absolute power to make more worlds, and infinite numbers of other creatures, and to render every creature a higher mark of his power, *yet in regard of his decree to the contrary, he cannot do it.* He hath a physical power, but after his resolve to the contrary, not a moral power: the exercise of his power is subordinate to his decree, but not the essence of his power.* The decree of God takes not away any power from God, because the power of God is his own essence, and incapable of change; and is as great physically and essentially after his decree as it was before; only his will hath put in a bar to the demonstration of all that power which he is able to exercise. As a prince that can raise 100,000 men for an invasion, raises only 20 or 30,000; he here, by his order, limits his power, but does not divest himself of his authority and power to raise the whole number of the forces of his dominions if he pleases: the power of God hath more objects than his decree hath; but since it is his perfection to be immutable, and not to change his decree, he cannot morally put forth his power upon all those objects, which as it is essentially in him, he hath ability to do. † God hath decreed to save those that believe in Christ, and to judge unbelievers to everlasting perdition: he cannot morally

* Gamach in Aquin. tom. 1. quest. 25. † Creil. de Deo. cap. 22.

condemn the first, or save the latter; yet he hath not divested himself of his absolute power to save all, or condemn all. Or suppose God hath decreed not to create more worlds than this we are now in, does his decree weaken his strength to create more if he pleased? his not creating more is not a want of strength, but a want of will: it is an act of liberty, not an act of impotency. As when a man solemnly resolves not to walk in such a way, or come at such a place, his resolution deprives him not of his natural strength to walk thither; but fortifies his will against using his strength in any such motion to that place. The will of God hath set bounds to the exercise of his power, but does not infringe that absolute power which still resides in his nature: he is girded with more power than he puts forth, *Psalm* 65. 6.

4 As the power of God is infinite, in regard of his essence, of the objects, and of action, so, fourthly, in regard of *duration*. The apostle calls it an *eternal power*. *Rom.* 1. 20. His eternal power is collected and concluded from the things that are made: they must needs be the product of some being which contains truly in itself all power, who wrought them with engines, without instruments: and therefore this power must be infinite, and possessed of an unalterable virtue of acting. If it be eternal, it must be infinite, and hath neither beginning nor end; what is eternal hath no bounds. If it be eternal, and not limited by time, it must be infinite, and not to be restrained by any finite object: his power never begun to be, nor ever ceaseth to be, it cannot languish; men are fain to unbend themselves, and must have some time to recruit their tired spirits: but the power of God is perpetually vigorous, without any interrupting qualm. *Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary?* *Isa.* 40. 28. That might which suffered no diminution from eternity, but formed so great a world by his power from nothing, will not suffer any dimness or decrease to eternity. This power being

the same with his essence, is as durable as his essence, and resides for ever in his nature.

8. The eighth consideration, for the right understanding of this attribute is, that the impossibility of God's doing some things, is no *infringing of his almightiness, but rather a strengthening of it.* It is granted that some things God cannot do; or rather, as Aquinas and others, it is better to say, such things cannot be done, than to say that God cannot do them; to remove all kind of imputation or reflection of weakness on God, * and because the reason of the impossibility of those things is in the nature of the things themselves.

1. First, some things are impossible *in their own nature.* Such are all those things which imply a contradiction; as for a thing to be, and not to be at the same time; for the sun to shine, and not to shine at the same moment of time; for a creature to act, and not to act at the same instant: one of those parts must be false; for if it be true that the sun shines this moment, it must be false to say it doth not shine. So it is impossible that a rational creature can be without reason: it is a contradiction to be a rational creature, and yet want that which is essential to a rational creature. So it is impossible that the will of man can be compelled, because liberty is the essence of the will; while it is will it cannot be constrained; and if it be constrained it ceaseth to be will. † God cannot at one time act as the author of the will, and the destroyer of the will. It is impossible that vice and virtue, light and darkness, life and death should be the same thing. Those things admit not of a conception in any understanding. Some things are impossible to be done, because of the incapability of the subject; as for a creature to be made infinite, independent, to preserve itself without the divine concourse and assistance. So a brute cannot be taken into communion with God, and to everlasting spiritual blessedness, be-

* Robins. observat. p. 14.

† Magalano de scientia Dei, part. 2. c. 6. § 3.

cause the nature of a brute is incapable of such an elevation; a rational creature only can understand and relish spiritual delights, and is capable to enjoy God and have communion with him. Indeed God may change the nature of a brute, and bestow such faculties of understanding and will upon it, as to render it capable of such blessedness; but then it is no more a brute, but a rational creature: but while it remains a brute, the excellency of the nature of God does not admit of communion with such a subject: so that this is not for want of power in God, but because of a deficiency in the creature: to suppose that God could make a contradiction true, is to make himself false, and to do just nothing.

2. Some things are impossible *to the nature and being of God.* As to die, implies a flat repugnance to the nature of God: to be able to die, is to be able to be cashiered out of being. If God were able to deprive himself of life, he might then cease to be: he were not then a necessary, but an uncertain contingent being, and could not be said *only to have immortality*, as he is. He cannot die who is life itself, and necessarily existent: he cannot grow old or decay, because he cannot be measured by time. And this is no part of weakness, but the perfection of power. His power is that whereby he remains for ever fixed in his own everlasting being: that cannot be reckoned as necessary to the omnipotence of God, which all mankind count a part of weakness in themselves. God is omnipotent because he is not impotent; and if he could die, he would be impotent, not omnipotent: death is the feebleness of nature. It is undoubtedly the greatest impotence to cease to be: who would count it a part of omnipotency to disenable himself, and sink into nothing? The impossibility for God to die, is not a fit article to impeach his omnipotence; this would be a strange way of arguing, a thing is not powerful, because it is not feeble, and cannot cease to be powerful; for death is a cessation of all power. * God is Almighty in doing what he will, not in suffering what he will not. To

* August.

die is not an active, but a passive power; a defect of a power. God is of too noble a nature to perish.

Some things are impossible to that eminency of nature which he hath above all creatures; as to walk, sleep, feed, these are imperfections belonging to bodies and compound natures. If he could walk, he were not every where present: motion speaks succession. If he could increase, he would not have been perfect before.

3. Some things are impossible *to the glorious perfections of God.* God cannot do any thing unbecoming his holiness and goodness; any thing unworthy of himself, and against the perfections of his nature. God can do whatsoever he can will. As he actually does whatsoever he actually wills; so it is possible for him to do whatsoever it is possible for him to will. He doth whatsoever he will, and can do whatsoever he can will; but he cannot do what he cannot will: he cannot will any unrighteous thing, and therefore cannot do any unrighteous thing. God cannot love sin, this is contrary to his holiness; he cannot violate his word, this is a denial of his truth; he cannot punish an innocent creature, this is contrary to his goodness; he cannot cherish an impenitent sinner, this is an injury to his justice: he cannot forget what is done in the world, this is a disgrace to his omniscience; he cannot deceive, this is contrary to his faithfulness: none of these things can be done by him, because of the perfection of his nature. Would it not be an imperfection in God to absolve the guilty, and condemn the innocent? Is it congruous to the righteous and holy nature of God to command murder and adultery; to command men not to worship him, but to be base and unthankful? These things would be against the rules of righteousness. As when we say of a good man, he cannot rob or fight a duel; we do not mean that he wants a courage for such an act, or that he hath not a natural strength and knowledge to manage his weapon as well as another; but he hath a righteous principle strong in him which will not not suffer him to do it; his will is settled against it: no power can pass into act unless applied by the will. But the will of God cannot

will any thing but what is worthy of him, and consistent with his goodness.

The scripture saith, *it is impossible for God to lie;* and God *cannot deny himself* because of his faithfulness, 2 *Tim.* 2. 13. As he cannot die, because he is life itself; as he cannot deceive, because he is goodness itself; as he cannot do an unwise action, because he is wisdom itself; so he cannot speak a false word, because he is truth itself. If he should speak any thing as true, and not know it, where is his infinite knowledge and comprehensiveness of understanding? If he should speak any thing as true, which he knows to be false, where is his infinite righteousness? If he should deceive any creature, there is an end of his perfection and fidelity and veracity. If he should be deceived himself, there is an end of his omniscience; we must then fancy him to be a deceitful God, an ignorant God, that is, no God at all. * If he should lie, he would be God and no God; God upon supposition, and no God, because not the first truth. All unrighteousness is weakness, not power; it is a defection from right reason, a deviation from moral principles, and the rule of perfect action, and ariseth from a defect of goodness and power: it is a weakness, and not omnipotence, to lose goodness: † God is light, it is the perfection of light not to become darkness, and a want of power in light, if it should become darkness: his power is infinitely strong, so is his wisdom infinitely clear, and his will infinitely pure. Would it not be a part of weakness to have a disorder in himself, and these perfections shock one against another? Since all perfections are in God in the most sovereign height of perfection, nothing can be done by the infinity of one against the infinity of the other. He would then be unstable in his own perfections, and depart from the infinite rectitude of his own will, if he should do an evil action. Again; ‡ what is an argument of greater strength, than to be utterly free from such infirmity? God is omnipotent, because he cannot do evil, and would not be omnipotent

* Becan. sum Theolog. p. 83. † Maximus Tyrius. ‡ Ambrose.

if he could: such things would be marks of weakness, and not characters of majesty. Would you count a sweet fountain impotent, because it cannot send forth bitter streams? Or the sun weak, because it cannot diffuse darkness as well as light in the air? There is an inability arising from weakness, and an ability arising from perfection: it is the perfection of angels and blessed spirits, that they cannot sin: and it would be the imperfection of God, if he could do evil.

Hence it follows, that *it is impossible that a thing past should not be past.* If we ascribe power to God, to make a thing that is past not to be past, we do not truly ascribe power to him, but weakness: for it is to make God to lie: as though God might not have created man, yet after he had created Adam, though he should presently have reduced Adam to his first nothing, yet it would be for ever true that Adam was created, and it would for ever be false that Adam never was created: so though God may prevent sin, yet when sin hath been committed, it will always be true that sin was committed: it will never be true to say such a creature that did sin, did not sin; his sin cannot be recalled: though God by pardon take off the guilt of Peter's denying our Saviour, yet it will be eternally true, that Peter did deny him. It is repugnant to the righteousness and truth of God, to make that which was once true to become false, and not true; that is, to make a truth to become a lie, and a lie to become a truth.

This is well argued from *Heb.* 6. 18. *It is impossible for God to lie.* * The apostle argues, that what God had promised and sworn, will come to pass, and cannot but come to pass. Now if God could make a thing past not to be past, this consequence would not be good, for then he might make himself not to have promised, not to have sworn, after he hath promised and sworn: and so if there were a power to undo that which is past, there would be no foundation for faith, no certainty of revelation. It cannot be asserted, that God hath created the

* Becan sum. Theol. p. 84. Crel. de Deo. cap. 22.

world, that God hath sent his Son to die, that God hath accepted his death for man: these might not be true, if it were possible that that which hath been done, might be said never to have been done: so that what any may imagine to be a want of power in God, is the highest perfection of God; and the greatest security to a believing creature that hath to do with God.

Fourthly, Some things are impossible to be done, *because of God's ordination.* Some things are impossible, not in their own nature, but in regard of the determined will of God; so God might have destroyed the world after Adam's fall, but it was impossible; not that God wanted power to do it, but because he did not only decree from eternity to create the world, but did also decree to redeem the world by Jesus Christ, and erected the world in order to the manifestation of his glory in Christ, *Eph.* 1. 4, 5. The choice of some in Christ was *before the foundation of the world;* supposing that there was no hinderance in the justice of God to pardon the sin of Adam after his fall, and to execute no punishment on him; yet in regard of God's threatening, that in the day he eat of the forbidden fruit, he should die, it was impossible. So though it was possible that the cup should pass from our blessed Saviour, that is, possible in its own nature; yet it was not possible in regard of the determination of God's will; since he had both decreed and published his will to redeem man by the blood of his Son. These things God by his absolute power might have done, but upon the account of his decree, they were impossible, because it is repugnant to the nature of God to be mutable; it is to deny his own wisdom which contrived them, and his own will which resolved them, not to do that which he had decreed to do. This would be a diffidence in his wisdom, and a change of his will. The impossibility of them is no result of a want of power, no mark of an imperfection, of feebleness, and impotence; but the perfection of immutability and unchangeableness.

Thus have I endeavoured to give you a right notion of this excellent attribute of the power of God; which may

serve us for a matter of meditation, admiration, fear of him, trust in him, which are the proper uses we should make of this doctrine of divine power. The want of a right understanding of this doctrine of the divine power hath caused many to run into mighty absurdities; I have therefore taken the more pains to explain it.

PART III.

EVIDENCE OF DIVINE POWER.

Demonstrated by the power of creatures—Exceeds all the power of creatures—The distinct power of the creatures united in God—Infinite power and perfection inseparable—The simplicity of the divine being proves his infinite power—All the miracles wrought in the world manifest this power—The power of the human mind.

THE second thing I proposed, is the *reasons* to prove God to be omnipotent. The scripture describes God by this attribute of power. *He hath done whatsoever he pleased, Psal.* 115. 3. It sometimes sets forth his power in a way of derision of those that seem to doubt of it; as when Sarah doubted of his ability to give her a child in her old age. *Is any thing too hard for the Lord, Gen.* 18. 14. They deserve to be scoffed, that will despoil God of his strength, and measure him by

their shallow models. And when Moses uttered something of unbelief of this attribute, as if God were not able to feed 600,000 Israelites besides women and children, which he aggravates by a kind of imperious scoff; *Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them to suffice them?* Or *shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them*, &c. *Numb.* 11. 23. God takes him up short, ver. 23, *Is the Lord's hand waxed short?* What, can any weakness seize upon my hand? Can I not draw out of my own treasures what is needful for a supply? The hand of God is not at one time strong, and another time feeble. Hence it is that we read of the hand and arm of God, an out-stretched arm; because the strength of a man is exerted by his hand and arm; the power of God is called the arm of his power, and the right hand of his strength. Sometimes according to the different manifestation of it, it is expressed by *finger*, when a less power is evidenced; by *hand*, when something greater; by *arm*, when more mighty than the former. Since God is eternal, without limits of time, he is also almighty, without limits of strength. As he cannot be said to be more in being now than he was before; so he is neither more nor less in strength than he was before; as he cannot cease to be, so he cannot cease to be powerful, because he is eternal. His eternity and power are linked together as equally demonstrable, *Rom.* 1. 20. God is called, the God of gods, El Elohim, *Dan.* 11. 36, the mighty of mighties, whence all mighty persons have their activity and vigour; he is called *the Lord of hosts*, as being the Creator and conductor of the heavenly militia.

Reason 1. *The power that is in creatures demonstrates* a greater and an inconceivable power in God. Nothing in the world is without a power of activity according to its nature; no creature but can act something; the sun warms and enlightens every thing; it sends its influences upon the earth, into the bowels of the earth, into the depths of the sea; all generations owe themselves to its instrumental virtue; how powerful is a small seed to rise into a mighty tree with a lofty top, and extensive bran-

ches, and send forth other seeds, which can still multiply into numberless plants? How wonderful is the power of the Creator, who hath endowed so small a creature as a seed with so fruitful an activity? Yet this is but the virtue of a limited nature; God is both the producing and preserving cause of all the virtue in any creature, in every creature; the power of every creature belongs to him as the fountain, and is truly his power in the creature. As he is the first being, he is the original of all being; as he is the first good, he is the spring of all goodness; as he is the first truth, he is the source of all truth; so as he is the first power, he is the fountain of all power.

He therefore that communicates to the creature what power it hath, *contains eminently much more power in himself. He that teaches man knowledge, shall not he know? Psal.* 94. 10. So he that gives created beings power, shall not he be powerful? The first being must have as much power as he hath given to others; he could not transfer that upon another, which he did not transcendently possess himself. The sole cause of created power cannot be destitute of any power in himself. We see that the power of one creature transcends the power of another. Beasts can do the things that plants cannot do; besides the power of growth they have a power of sense and progressive motion; men can do more than beasts; they have rational souls to measure the earth and heavens, and to be repositories of multitudes of things, notions, and conclusions. We may well imagine angels to be far superior to man; the power of the Creator must far surmount the power of the creature, and must needs be infinite; for if it be limited, it is limited by himself or by some other; if by some other, he is no longer a Creator, but a creature; for that which limits him in his nature, communicated that nature to him; not by himself, for he would not deny himself any necessary perfection; we must still conclude a reserve of power in him, that he that made these can make many more of the same kind.

All the power which is distinct in the creatures *must*

be united in God. One creature hath strength to do this, another to do that; every creature is as a cistern filled with a particular and limited power, according to the capacity of its nature, from this fountain; all are distinct streams from God; but the strength of every creature, though distinct in the rank of creatures, is united in God the centre, whence those lines were drawn, the fountain whence those streams were derived; if the power of one creature be admirable, as the power of an angel, which the psalmist saith, *excelleth in strength;* how much greater must the power of a legion of angels be. How inconceivably superior to the power of all those numbers of spiritual natures, which are the excellent works of God? Now if all this particular power which is in every angel distinct, were compacted in one angel, how would it exeed our understanding, and be above our power to form a distinct conception of it? What is thus divided in every angel, must be thought united in the Creator of angels, and far more excellent in him. Every thing is in a more noble manner in the fountain, than in the streams which distill and descend from it. He that is the original of all those distinct powers, must be the seat of all power without distinction; in him is the union of all without division; what is in them as a quality, is in him as his essence. Again, if all the powers of several creatures, with all their principal qualities and vigours, both of beasts, plants, and rational creatures, were united in one subject; as if one lion had the strength of all the lions that ever were; or if one elephant had the strength of all the elephants that ever were; nay, if one bee had all the power of motion and stinging that all bees ever had, it would have a vast strength; but if the strength of all those thus gathered into one of every kind should be lodged in one sole creature, one man, would it not be a strength too big for our conception? Or suppose one cannon had all the force of all the cannons that ever were in the world, what a battery would it make, and, as it were, shake the whole frame of heaven and earth? All this strength must be much more incomprehensible in God, all is united in him. If it were in one in-

dividual created nature, it would still be but a finite power in a finite nature; but in God it is infinite and immense.

Reason 2. If there were not an incomprehensible power in God, *he would not be infinitely perfect.* God is the first Being; it can only be said of him, *Est*, he is. All other things are nothing to him, *less than nothing, and vanity*, and *reputed as nothing.* All the inhabitants of the earth, with all their wit and strength, are counted as if they were not; just in comparison with him and his being, as a little mote in the sun-beams: God therefore is a pure Being. Any kind of weakness whatsoever is a defect, a degree of not being; so far as any thing wants this or that power, it may be said not to be. Were there any thing of weakness in God, any want of strength which belonged to the perfection of a nature, it might be said of God, he is not this or that, he wants this or that perfection of being, and so he would not be a pure being, there would be something of not being in him. But God being the first Being, the only original Being, he is infinitely distant from not being, and therefore infinitely distant from any thing of weakness.

*Again, if God can know whatsoever is possible to be done by him and cannot do it, there would be something more in his knowledge than in his power. What would then follow? that the essence of God would be in some sense greater than itself, and less than itself, because his knowledge and his power are his essence; his power is as much his essence as his knowledge: and therefore in regard of his knowledge his essence would be greater, in regard of his power his essence would be less, which is a thing impossible to be conceived in a most perfect being. We must understand this of those things, which are properly, and in their own nature, subject to the divine knowledge; for otherwise God knows more than we can do; for he knows sin, but he cannot act it, because sin belongs not to power, but weakness; and sin comes under the knowledge of God, not in itself, and its own

* Victorin, in Petar. Tom. 1. p. 333.

nature, but as it is a defect from God, and contrary to good, which is the proper object of divine knowledge. He knows it also not as possible to be done by himself, but as possible to be done by the creature. * Again, if God were not omnipotent, we might imagine something more perfect than God: for if we bar God from any one thing which in its own nature is possible, we may imagine a being that can do that thing, one that is able to effect it; and so imagine an agent greater than God, a being able to do more than God is able to do, and consequently a being more perfect than God: but no being more perfect than God can be imagined by any creature. Nothing can be called most perfect, if any thing of activity be wanting to it. Active power follows the perfection of a thing, and all things are counted more noble, by how much more of efficacy and virtue they possess. We count those the best and most perfect plants, that have the greatest medicinal virtue in them, and power of working up the body for the cure of distempers. God is perfect of himself, and therefore most powerful of himself. If his perfection in wisdom and goodness be unsearchable, his power, which belongs to perfection, and and without which all the other excellencies of his nature were insignificant, and could not shew themselves, must be unsearchable also. It is by the title of *Almighty* he is denominated, when declared to be unsearchable to perfection, *Job* 11. 7. *Canst thou by searching find out God, canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?* This would be limited and searched out, if he were destitute of an active ability to do whatsoever he pleased to do, whatsoever was possible to be done. As he hath not a perfect liberty of will, if he could not will what he pleased; so he would not have a perfect activity, if he could not do what he willed.

Reason 3. The *simplicity* of God manifests it. Every substance, the more spiritual it is, the more powerful it is. All perfections are more united in a simple, than in a compound being. Angels being spirits, are more powerful than bodies. Where there is the greatest simplicity,

* Victorin in Petar. Tom. 1. p. 233.

there is the greatest unity; and where there is the greatest unity, there is the greatest power. Where there is a composition of a faculty and a member, the member or organ may be weakened and rendered unable to act, though the power still resides in the faculty. As a man, when his arm or hand is cut off or broke, hath the faculty of motion still; but he hath lost that instrument, that part whereby he did manifest and put forth that motion: but God being a pure spiritual nature, hath no members, no organs to be defaced or impaired. All impediments of action arise either from the nature of the thing that acts, or from something without it. There can be no hinderance to God to do whatsoever he pleases; not in himself, because he is the most simple being, hath no contrariety in himself, is not composed of divers things: and it cannot be from any thing without himself, because nothing is equal to him, much less superior. He is the greatest, the supreme: all things were made by him, depend upon him, nothing can disappoint his intentions.

Reason 4. The *miracles* that have been in the world *evidence the power of God.* Extraordinary productions have awakened men from their stupidity, to the acknowledgment of the immensity of divine power. Miracles are such effects as have been wrought without the assistance and co-operation of natural causes, yea, contrary, and besides the ordinary course of nature, above the reach of any created power. Miracles have been; and saith Bradwardine*, "To deny that ever such things were, is uncivil: it is inhuman to deny all the histories of Jews and christians;" whoever denies miracles must deny all possibility of miracles, and so must imagine himself fully skilled in the extent of divine power. How was the sun suspended from its motion for some hours; the dead raised from the grave; those reduced from the brink of it, that had been brought near to it by prevailing diseases; and this by a word speaking? How were the famished lions bridled from exercising their rage upon Daniel, exposed to them for a prey? The activity of the fire restrained for

* Lib. 1. cap. 1. p. 38.

the preservation of the three children? which proves a Deity more powerful than all creatures. No power upon earth can hinder the operation of the fire upon combustible matter, when they are united, unless by quenching the fire or removing the matter: but no created power can restrain the fire, so long as it remains so, from acting according to its nature. This was done by God in the case of the three children, and that of the burning bush. *Exod.* 3. 2. It was as much miraculous that the bush should not consume, as it was natural that it should burn by the efficacy of the fire upon it. No element is so obstinate and deaf, but it hears and obeys his voice, and performs his orders, though contrary to its own nature: all the violence of the creature is suspended as soon as it receives his command.* He that gave the original to nature, can take away the necessity of nature: he presides over creatures, but is not confined to those laws he hath prescribed to creatures. He framed nature, and can turn the channels of nature according to his own pleasure. Men dig into the bowels of nature, search into all the treasures of it, to find medicines to cure a disease, and after all their attempts it may prove labour in vain: but God by an act of his will, one word of his mouth, overturns the victory of death, and rescues from the most desperate diseases†. All the miracles which were wrought by the apostles, either speaking some words, or touching with the hand, were not effected by any virtue inherent in their words, or in their touches. For such virtue inherent in any created finite subject would be created and finite itself, and consequently were incapable to produce effects, which required an infinite virtue, as miracles do which are above the power of nature. So when our Saviour wrought miracles, it was not by any quality resident in his human nature, but by the sole power of his divinity. The flesh could only do what was proper to the flesh; but the Deity did what was proper to the Deity. God alone doeth great wonders, *Psal.* 136. 4. Excluding every other cause from producing such

* Damianus in Petar. † Fauch, in Acts, vol. 2. § 56.

things. He only doth those things which are above the power of nature, and cannot be wrought by any natural causes whatsoever. He does not hereby put his omnipotence to any stress; it is as easy with him to turn nature out of its settled course, as it was to place it in the station it holds, and appoint it the course it runs. All the works of nature are indeed miracles and testimonies of the power of God producing them; and sustaining them: but works above the power of nature, being novelties and unusual, strike men with greater admiration upon their appearance, because they are not the products of nature, but the convulsions of it.

I might also add as an argument, the power of the mind of man to conceive more than hath been wrought by God in the world. And God can work whatsoever perfection the mind of man can conceive: otherwise the reaches of a created imagination and fancy, would be more extensive than the power of God. His power therefore is far greater than the conception of any intellectual creature; else the creature would be of a greater capacity to conceive, than God is to effect. The creature would have a power of conception above God's power of activity; and consequently a creature in some respects greater than himself. Now whatsoever a creature can conceive possible to be done, is but finite in its own nature; and if God could not produce what being a created understanding can conceive possible to be done, he would be less than infinite in power, nay, he could not go to the extent of what is finite. But I have touched this before; that God can create more than he hath created, and in a more perfect way of being, as considered simply in themselves.

PART IV.

THE POWER OF GOD IN CREATION.

History of creation—The creative power of God distinguished from idols—Created all things out of nothing—Variety of creatures—All things created with the greatest ease and facility—Without instruments—By a simple act of his will—Instantaneous production of all things.

THE third general thing, is to declare, how the power of God appears, in creation, in government, in redemption.

First, in *creation*. With what majestic lines doth God set forth his power, in giving being and endowments to all creatures in the world? All that is in heaven and earth is his, and shews the greatness of his power, glory, victory, and majesty, 1 *Chron.* 29. 11. The heaven being so magnificent a piece of work, is called emphatically, *the firmament of his power*, *Psal.* 150. 1; his power being more conspicuous and unveiled in that glorious arch of the world. Indeed *God exalts by his power*, *Job* 36, 22, that is, exalts himself by his power in all the works of his hands; in the smallest shrub, as well as the most glorious sun. All his works of nature are truly miracles, though we consider them not, being blinded with too frequent and customary a sight of them; yet in the neglect of all the rest, the view of the heavens more affects us with astonishment at the might of God's arm; these *declare his glory, and the firma-*

ment shews his handy-work, Psal. 19. 1. And the psalmist, *Psal.* 8. 3, peculiarly calls them *his heavens*, and *the work of his fingers;* these were immediately created by God, whereas many other things in the world were brought into being by the power of God, yet by the means of the influence of the heavens.

1. His power is the first thing evident in the history of the creation. *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, Gen.* 1. 1. There is no appearance of any thing in this declaratory preface, but of power; the characters of wisdom march after in the distinct formation of things, and animating them with suitable qualities for an universal good. By heaven and earth is meant the whole mass of the creatures; by heaven, all the airy region, with all the host of it: by the earth is meant, all that which makes the intire inferior globe. * The Jews observe, that in the first of Genesis, in the whole chapter, unto the finishing the work in six days, God is called אלהים which is a name of power, and that thirty two times in that chapter; but after finishing the six days work, he is called תאלהים, which according to their notion is a name of goodness and kindness; his power is first visible in framing the world, before his goodness is visible in sustaining and preserving it. It was by this name of *power* and *almighty* that he was known in the first ages of the world, not by his name Jehovah; *And I appeared unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by the name of God Almighty; but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them, Exod.* 6. 3. Not but that they were acquainted with the name, but did not experience the intent of it, which signified his truth in the performance of his promises; they knew him by that name, as promising, but they knew him not by that name, as performing. He would be known by his name Jehovah, true to his word, when he was about to effect the deliverance from Egypt; a type of the eternal redemption, wherein the truth of God, in performing his first promise, is gloriously magnified. And hence it is

* Mercer, p. 7. col. 1, 2.

that God is called *Almighty* more in the book of Job, than in all the scripture besides, I think about thirty-two times, and Jehovah but once, which is in *Job* 12. 9, unless in *Job* 38, when God is introduced speaking himself; which is an argument of Job's living before the deliverance from Egypt, when God was known more by his works of creation, than by the performance of his promises, before the name Jehovah was formally published. Indeed, this attribute of his eternal power, is the first thing visible and intelligible upon the first glance of the eye upon the creatures, *Rom.* 1. 20. Bring a man out of the cave where he hath been nursed, without seeing any thing out of the confines of it, and let him lift up his eyes to the heavens, and take a prospect of that glorious body the sun, then cast them down to the earth, and behold the surface of it with its green cloathing; the first notion which will start up in his mind from that spring of wonders, is that of power, which he will at first adore with a religious atonishment. The wisdom of God in them is not so presently apparent, till after a more exquisite consideration of his works, and knowledge of the properties of their natures, the conveniency of their situations, the usefulness of their functions, and the order wherein they are linked together for the good of the universe.

2. By this creative power God is often distinguished from *all the idols and false gods in the world.* And by this title he sets forth himself when he would act any great and wonderful work in the world. *He is great above all gods,* for *he hath done whatsoever he pleased in heaven and in earth, Psal.* 135. 5, 6. Upon this is founded all the worship he challenges in the world, as his peculiar glory. *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, honour, and power, for thou hast created all things, Rev.* 4. 11; and, *I have made the earth, and created man upon it, Rev.* 10. 6. *I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded, Isa.* 45. 12, What is the issue, *They shall be ashamed and confounded, all of them, that are makers of idols,* ver. 16. And the weakness of idols is ex-

pressed by this title, *The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, Jer.* 10. 11. *The portion of Jacob is not like them, for he is the former of all things,* ver. 16. What is not that God able to do, that hath created so great a world? How doth the power of God appear in creation?

1. In making the world of *nothing*. When we say, the world was made of nothing, we mean, that there was no matter existent for God to work upon, but what he raised himself in the first act of creation. In this regard, the power of God in creation surmounts his power in providence. Creation supposes nothing, providence supposeth something in being. Creation intimates a creature making, providence speaks a thing already made, and capable of government, and in government. God uses second causes to bring about his purposes.

The world was made of nothing. The earth which is described as the first matter, without any form or ornament, without any distinction or figures, was of God's forming in the bulk, before he adorned it with his pencil. *God in the beginning creating the heaven and the earth, Gen.* 1. 1, 2. includes two things: First, that they were created in the beginning of time, and before all other things. Secondly, That God begun the creation of the world from those things. Therefore before the heavens and the earth there was nothing absolutely created, and therefore no matter in being before an act of creation passed upon it. It could not be eternal, because nothing can be eternal but God; it must therefore have a beginning: if it had a beginning from itself, then it was before it was. If it acted in making itself before it was made, then it had a being before it had a being; for that which is nothing, can act nothing: the action of any thing supposes the existence of the thing which acts. It being made, it was not before it was made; for to be made is to be brought into being. It was made then by another, and that maker is God. It is necessary that the first original of things was from nothing: when we see one thing arise from another, we must suppose an original of

the first of each kind: as when we see a tree spring up from a seed, we know that seed came out of the bowels of another tree; it had a parent, and it had a matter; we must come to some first cause, or else we run into an endless maze: we must come to some first tree, some first seed that had no cause of the same kind, no matter of it, but was mere nothing. * Creation supposes a production from nothing; because, if you suppose a thing without any real or actual existence, it is not capable of any other production than from nothing: nothing must be supposed before the world, or we must suppose it eternal, that is to deny it to be a creature, and make it God. The creation of spiritual substances, such as angels and souls, evinces this; those things that are purely spiritual, and consist not of matter, cannot pretend to any original from matter, and therefore they rose from nothing. If spiritual things arose from nothing, much more may corporeal, because they are of a lower nature than spiritual. And he that can create a higher nature of nothing, can create an inferior nature of nothing. As bodily things are more imperfect than spiritual, so their creation may be supposed easier than that of spiritual. There was as little need of any matter to be wrought to his hands, to contrive into this visible fabric, as there was to erect such an excellent order, as the glorious cherubims.

This creation of things from nothing, *speaks an infinite power.* The distance between nothing and being, hath been always counted so great, that nothing but an infinite power can make such distances meet together; either for nothing to pass into being, or being to return to nothing. To have a thing arise from nothing, was so difficult a text to those that were ignorant of the scriptures, that they knew not how to fathom it; and therefore laid it down as a certain rule, that of nothing, nothing is made; which is true of a created power, but not of an uncreated and almighty power. A greater distance cannot be imagined than that which is between nothing and some-

* Suarez. Vol. 3. p. 6.

thing; that which hath no being, and that which hath: and a greater power cannot be imagined, than that which brings something out of nothing. * We know not how to conceive a nothing, and afterwards a being from that nothing; but we must remain swallowed up in admiration of the cause that gives it being, and acknowledge it to be without any bounds and measures of greatness and power. The further any thing is from being, the more immense must that power be which brings it into being: it is not conceivable that the power of all the angels in one, can give being to the smallest spire of grass. To imagine therefore so small a thing as a bee, a fly, a grain of corn, or an atom of dust to be made of nothing, would stupify any creature in the consideration of it: much more to behold the heavens with all the troop of stars, the earth with all its embroidery, and the sea with all her inhabitants of fish; and man, the noblest creature of all, to arise out of the womb of mere emptiness. Indeed God had not acted as an Almighty Creator if he had stood in need of any materials, but of his own framing: it had been as much as his Deity was worth, if he had not had all within the compass of his own power, that was necessary to operation; if he must have been beholden to something without himself; and above himself, for matter to work upon: had there been such a necessity, we could not have imagined him to be omnipotent, and consequently not God.

In this the power of God *exceeds the power of all natural and rational agents.* Nature, or the order of second causes, hath a vast power. The sun generates flies and other insects, but of some matter, the slime of the earth or a dunghill; the sun and the earth bring forth harvests of corn, but from seed first sown in the earth; fruits are brought forth, but from the sap of the plant. Were there no seed or plants in the earth, the power of the earth would be idle, and the influence of the sun insignificant; whatsoever strength either of them had in their nature, must be useless without matter to work upon.

* Amyral. Morale, tom. 1. p. 252.

All the united strength of nature cannot produce the least thing out of nothing: it may multiply and increase things, by the powerful blessing God gave it at the first erecting of the world, but it cannot create. The word which signifies *creation*, used in *Gen.* 1. 1, is not ascribed to any second cause, but only to God; a word in that sense as incommunicable to any thing else, as the action it signifies.

Rational creatures can produce admirable pieces of art from small things, yet still out of matter created to their hands. Excellent garments may be woven, but from the entrails of a small silk-worm, Delightful and medicinal spirits and essences may be extracted by ingenious chymists, but out of the bodies of plants and minerals. No picture can be drawn without colours; no statue engraven without stone, no building erected without timber, stones, and other materials. Nor can any man raise a thought, without some matter framed to his hands, or cast into him. Matter is by nature formed to the hands of all artificers; they bestow a new figure upon it, by the help of instruments, and the product of their own wit and skill, but they create not the least particle of matter; when they want it, they must be supplied, or else stand still, as well as nature; for none of them, or all together, can make the least mite or atom. And when they have wrought all that they can, they will not want some to find a flaw and defect in their work. God as a Creator hath the only prerogative, to draw what he pleases from nothing, without any defect, without any imperfection: he can raise what matter he pleases; ennoble it with what form he pleases. Of nothing, nothing can be made by any created agent: but the omnipotent architect of the world, is not under the same necessity, nor is limited to the same rule, and tied by so short a tedder as created nature, or an ingenious, yet feeble artificer.

2. It appears, in raising *such variety of creatures* from this barren womb of nothing, or from the matter which he first commanded to appear out of nothing. Had there been any pre-existent matter, yet the bringing forth such varieties and diversities of excellent creatures; some

with life, some with sense, and others with reason superadded to the rest; and those out of indisposed and undigested matter, would argue an infinite power resident in the first author of this variegated fabric. From this matter he formed that glorious sun, which every day displays its glory, scatters its beams, clears the air, ripens our fruits, and maintains the propagation of creatures in the world. From this matter he lighted those torches which he set in the heaven to qualify the darkness of the night: from this he compacted those bodies of light, which though they seem to us as little sparks, as if they were the glow-worms of heaven, yet some of them exceed in greatness this globe of the earth. And the highest of them hath so quick a motion, that some tell us, they run in the space of every hour 42 millions of leagues. From the same matter he drew the earth, on which we walk; from thence he extracted the flowers to adorn it, the hills to secure the valleys, and the rocks to fortify it against the inundations of the sea. And on this dull and sluggish element, he bestowed so great a fruitfulness, to maintain, feed, and multiply so many seeds of different kinds, and conferred upon those little bodies of seeds a power to multiply their kinds in conjunction with the fruitfulness of the earth to many thousands. From this rude matter, the slime or dust of the earth, he kneaded the body of man, and wrought so curious a fabric, fit to entertain a soul of heavenly extraction, formed by the breath of God. *Gen.* 2. 7. He brought light out of thick darkness, and living creatures, fish and fowl, out of inanimate waters, and gave a power of spontaneous motion to things arising from that matter which had no living motion. To convert one thing into another, is an evidence of infinite power, as well as creating things of nothing; for the distance between life and not life, is next to that which is between being and not being. God first forms matter out of nothing, and then draws upon, and from this indisposed chaos, many excellent portraitures. Neither earth nor sea were capable of producing living creatures, without an infinite power working upon it, and bringing into it such variety and multitude of forms; and this is

called by some, mediate creation; as the producing the chaos, which was without form and void, is called immediate creation. Is not the power of the potter admirable in forming out of tempered clay, such varieties of neat and curious vessels, that after they are fashioned, and past the furnace, look as if they were not of any kin to the matter they are formed of? And is it not the same with the glass-maker, that from a little melted jelly of sand and ashes, or the dust of flint, can blow up so pure a body as glass, and in such varieties of shapes; and is not the power of God more admirable, because infinite in forming so beautiful a world out of nothing; and such varieties of living creatures from matter utterly indisposed in its own nature for such forms?

And this conducts to a third thing, wherein the power of God appears, in that he did all this with *the greatest ease and facility.*

God created the world without *instruments.* As God made the world without the advice, so without the assistance of any other. *He stretched forth the heavens alone, and spread abroad the earth by himself, Isa.* 44. 24. He had no engine but his word; no pattern or model but himself. What need can he have of instruments, that is able to to create what instruments he pleases? Where there is no resistance in the object, where no need of preparation or instrumental advantage in the agent; there the actual determination of the will is sufficient to production. What instrument need we to the thinking of a thought, or an act of our will? Men indeed cannot act any thing without instruments; the best artificer must be beholden to something else for his noblest works of art. The carpenter cannot work without his rule, and axe, and saw, and other instruments; the watch-maker cannot act without his file and pliers; but in creation, there is nothing necessary to God but a simple act of his will, which is both the principal cause and instrumental. He had no scaffolds to rear it, no engines to polish it, no hammers or mattocks to clod and work it together. It is a miserable error to measure the actions of an infinite cause by the imperfect model of a finite, since by his own *power*

and outstretched arm, he made the heaven and the earth, Jer. 32. 17.

* What excellency would God have in his work above others, if he needed instruments as feeble men do? Every artificer is counted more admirable that can frame curious works with the less matter, fewer tools and assistances. God uses instruments in his works of providence, not for necessity but for the display of his wisdom in the management of them; yet those instruments were originally framed by him without instruments. Indeed some of the Jews thought the angels were the instruments of God in creating man, and that those words, *Let us make man in our own image*, were spoken to angels. But certainly the scripture, which denies God any counsellor in the model of creation, does not join any instrument with him in the operation, which is every where ascribed to himself without created assistance, *Isa.* 45. 18. It was not to angels God spake in that affair; if so, man was made after the image of angels, if they were companions with God in that work. But it is every where said, that man was made *after the image of God, Gen.* 1. 27. Again, the image wherein man was created, was that of dominion over the lower creatures, as appears ver. 26, which we find not conferred upon angels; and it is not likely that Moses should introduce the angels as God's privy counsel, of whose creation he had not mentioned one syllable.

Let us make man, rather signifies the Trinity, and is not spoken in a royal style, as some think. Which of the Jewish kings writ in the style, *We?* That was the custom of later times; and we must not measure the language of scripture by the style of Europe, of a far later date than the penning the history of the creation. If angels were his counsellors in the creation of the material world, what instrument had he in the creation of angels? If his own wisdom were the director, and his own will the producer of the one, why should we not think that he acted by his sole power in the other? It is concluded

* Gassend.

by most, that the power of creation cannot be derived to any creature, it being a work of omnipotence. The drawing something out from nothing, cannot be communicated without a communication of the Deity itself. The educing things from nothing exceeds the capacity of any creature, and the creature is of too feeble a nature to be elevated to so high a degree. It is very unreasonable to think that God needed any such aid. If an instrument were necessary for God to create the world, then he could not do it without the instrument; if he could not, he were not then all-sufficient in himself, if he depended upon any thing without himself for the production or consummation of his works. And it might be enquired how that instrument came into being; if it begun to be, and there was a time when it was not, it must have its being from the power of God; and then, why could not God as well create all things without an instrument, as create that instrument without an instrument? For there was no more power necessary to produce the whole without instruments, than to produce one creature without an instrument.

No creature can in its own nature be an instrument of creation. If any such instrument were used by God, it must be elevated in a miraculous and supernatural way; and what is so an instrument is in effect no instrument; for it works nothing by its own nature, but from an elevation of a superior nature, and beyond its own nature. All the power in the instrument is truly the power of God, and not the power of the instrument. And therefore what God doth by an instrument, he could do as well without. If you should see one apply a straw to iron, for the cutting of it, and effect it, you would not call the straw an instrument in that action, because there was nothing in the nature of the straw to do it. It was done wholly by some other force, which might have done it as well without the straw as with it. The narrative of the creation in Genesis removes any instrument from God. The plants, which are preserved and propagated by the influence of the sun, were created the day before the sun, viz. on the third day, whereas the light was col-

lected into the body of the sun on the fourth day; to shew, that though the plants do instrumentally owe their yearly beauty and preservation to the sun, yet they did not in any manner owe their creation to the instrumental heat and vigour of it.

God created the world by a *word, by a simple act of his will.* The whole creation is wrought by a word; *God said, let there be light;* and *God said, let there be a firmament.* Not that we should understand it of a sensible word, but to express the easiness of this operation to God, as easy as a word to man. We must understand it of a powerful order of his own will, which is expressed by the psalmist in the nature of a command, *He spake, and it was done, he commanded, and it stood fast, Psal.* 33. 6; and *He commanded, and they were created, Psal.* 148. 5. At the same instant that he willed them to stand forth, they did stand forth. The efficacious command of the Creator was the original of all things; the insensibility of nothing obeyed the act of his will. Creation is therefore entitled a *calling; He calls those things which are not, as if they were, Rom.* 4. 17. To create is no more with God than to call; and what he calls presents itself before him in the same posture that he calls it. He did with more ease make a world than we can form a thought. It is the same ease to him to create worlds, as to decree them. There needs no more than a resolve to have things wrought at such a time, and they will be, according to his pleasure. This will is his power: *Let there be light,* is the precept of his will; and *there was light,* is the effect of his precept. By a word was the matter of the heavens and the earth framed; by a word things separate themselves from the rude mass into their proper forms; by a word, light associates itself into one body, and forms a sun; by a word are the heavens, as it were, bespangled with stars, and the earth dressed with flowers; by a word, is the world both ceiled and floored. One act of his will formed the world, and perfected its beauty. All the variety and several exploits of his power were not caused by distinct words or acts of power. God uttered not distinct words for distinct species, as let there be an elephant, and

let there be a lion; but as he produced those various creatures out of one matter, so by one word. By one single command those varieties of creatures, with their clothing, ornaments, distinct notes, qualities, and functions, were brought forth. By one word, all the seeds of the earth, with their various virtues; by one word, all the fish of the sea, and fowls of the air in their distinct natures, instincts, and colours; by one word, all the beasts of the field, with their varieties. * Heaven and earth, spiritual and corporeal creatures, mortal and immortal, the greater and the less, visible and invisible, were formed with the same ease. A word made the least, and a word made the greatest. It is as little difficulty to him to produce the highest angel, as the lightest atom. It is enough for the existence of the stateliest cherubim, for God only to will his being. It was enough for the forming and fixing the sun to will the compacting of light into one body. The creation of the soul of man is expressed by *inspiration*, to shew that it is as easy with God to create a rational soul, as for man to breathe. † Breathing is natural to man, by communication of God's goodness; and the creation of the soul is as easy to God, by virtue of his almighty word. As there was no proportion between nothing and being; so there was as little proportion between a word and such glorious effects. A mere voice, coming from an omnipotent will, was capable to produce such varieties which angels and men have seen in all ages of the world, and this without weariness. What labour is there in willing, what pain could there be in speaking a word? *The Creator of the ends of the earth is not weary, Isa.* 40. 28. And though he be said to rest after the creation, it is to be meant a rest from work, not a repose from weariness. So great is the power of God, that without any matter, without any instruments, he could create many worlds, and with the same ease as he made this.

4. I might add also, the appearance of this power in the instantaneous production of things. The ending of

* August. † Theodoret.

his word was not only the beginning, but the perfection of every thing he spake into being; not several words to several parts and members, but one word, one breath of his mouth, one act of his will to the whole species of the creatures, and to every member of each individual. Heaven and earth were created in a moment, six days went to their disposal; and all that comely order we observe in the world was the work of a week: the matter was formed as soon as God had spoken the word; and in every part of the creation, as soon as God spake the word *Let it be so*, the answer immediately is, *it was so;* which notes the present standing up of the creature according to the act of his will: and therefore *one observes that *let there be light*, and *there was light*, in the Hebrew are the same words, without any alteration of the letter or point, only the conjunctive particle added יהי אור ויהי אור *Let there be light* and *let there be light*, to shew, that the same instant of speaking the divine word, was the appearance of the creature. So great was the authority of his will.

* Peirs, p. 111.

PART V.

THE POWER OF GOD IN PROVIDENCE.

The power of providence in natural government---Preservation of all things---Propagation of the creatures---Motions of the creatures---Moral government---Power of God in restraining enemies---Restraining evil---Forming the hearts of men to his own purposes---His gracious government---Judicial proceedings---God orders the nature of all creatures as he pleases---Effects his purposes by insignificant means.

Secondly. WE are to shew God's power in the *government* of the world. As God decreed from eternity the creation of things in time, so he decreed from eternity the particular ends of creatures, and their operations respecting those ends. Now as there was need of his power to execute his decree of creation, there is also need of his power to execute his decree about the manner of government. * All government is an act of the understanding, will, and power. Prudence to design belongs to the understanding, the election of the means belongs to the will, and the accomplishment of the whole is an act of power. It is a hard matter to determine which is most necessary: wisdom stands in as much need of power to perfect, as power does of wisdom, to model and draw out a scheme; though wisdom directs, power must effect. Wisdom and

* Suarez. vol. 1. lib. 3. cap. 10.

power are distinct things among men: a poor man in a cottage may have more prudence to advise, than a privy counsellor; and a prince more power to act, than wisdom to conduct. A pilot may direct though he be lame, and cannot climb the masts and spread the sails: but God is wanting in nothing; neither in wisdom to design, nor in will to determine, nor in power to accomplish His wisdom is not feeble, nor his power foolish: a powerful wisdom could not act what it would, and a foolish power would act more than it should. The power expressed in his government, is shadowed forth in the living creatures, which are God's instruments in it.

It is said, *Every one of them had four faces, Ezek.* 1. 10. that of a *man* to signify wisdom; of a *lion* and *eagle*, to signify their courage and strength to perform their offices. This power is evident in the natural, moral, gracious government of the word. There is a natural providence, which consists in the preservation of all things, propagation of them by corruptions and generations, and in a co-operation with them in their motions to attain their ends. Moral government is of the hearts and actions of men. Gracious government, as respecting the church.

I. His power is evident in *natural* government.

1. In *preservation.* God is the great father of the world, to nourish it as well as create it*. Man and beast would perish if there were not herbs for their food; and herbs would wither and perish, if the earth were not watered with fruitful showers. This some of the heathens acknowledged, in their worshipping God under the image of an ox, a useful creature, by reason of its strength, to which we owe so much of our food in corn. Hence God is styled the *preserver of man and beast.* Hence the Jews called God † *place; Psal.* 36. 6. because he is the substance of all things. By the same word whereby he gave being to things, he gives to them continuance and duration in being to such a term of time. As they were *created by his word,* they are *supported by his word, Heb.* 1. 3. The same powerful *fiat, let the earth bring forth grass,*

* Daille, in 1 Cor. 10. p. 101. † קום

when the plants first rose out of nothing, is expressed every spring, when they begin to lift up their heads from their naked roots and winter graves. The resurrection of light every morning, the reviving the pleasure of all things to the eye; the watering the vallies from the mountain springs; the curbing the natural appetite of the waters from covering the earth; every draught that the beasts drink, every lodging the fowls have, every bit of food for the sustenance of man and beast, is ascribed to the *opening of his hands*, the diffusing of his power, *Psal.* 104. 27, &c. as much as the first creation of things, and endowing them with their particular nature: whence the plants, which are so serviceable, are called the *trees of the Lord*, of Jehovah, that hath only being and power in himself. The whole psalm is but the description of his preserving, as the first of Genesis is of his creating power. It is by this power angels have so many thousand years remained in the power of understanding and willing. By this power things distant in their natures have been joined together, as a spiritual soul and an earthly body. By this power the heavenly bodies have for so many ages rolled in their spheres, and the tumultuous elements have persisted in their order: by this hath the matter of the world been to this day continued, and as capable of entertaining forms as it was at the first creation. What an amazing sight would it be to see a man hold a pillar of the Exchange upon one of his fingers? What is this to the power of God, *who holds the waters in the hollow of his hands, metes out the heaven with a span, and weighs the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Isa.* 40. 12.

* The preserving the earth from the violence of the sea is a plain instance of this power. How is that raging element kept pent within those lists where he first lodged it; continuing its course in its channel without overflowing the earth, and dashing in pieces the lower part of the creation? The natural situation of the water is to be above the earth, because it is lighter; and to be immediately under

* Daillé. Melange, part 2. p 457, &c.

the air, because it is heavier than that thinner element. Who restrains this natural quality of it, but that God that first formed it? The word of command at first, *hitherto shalt thou go, and no further*, keeps those waters linked together in their den, that they may not ravage the earth, but be useful to the inhabitants of it. And when once it finds a gap to enter, what power of earth can hinder its passage? How fruitless sometimes is all the art of man to send it to its proper channel, when once it hath spread its mighty waves over some countries, and swept away part of the inhabited earth? It hath triumphed in its victory, and withstood all the power of man to conquer its force. It is only the power of God that bridles it from spreading itself over the whole earth. And that his power might be more manifest, he hath set but a weak and small bank against it. Though he hath bounded it in some places by mighty rocks, which lift up their heads above it, yet in most places by feeble sand. How often is it seen in every stormy motion, when the waves boil high, and roll furiously, as if they would swallow up all the neighbouring houses upon the shore; when they come to touch those sandy limits, they bow their heads, fall flat, and sink into the lap whence they were raised; and seem to foam with anger that they can march no further, but must split themselves at so weak an obstacle? Can the sand be thought to be the cause of this? the weakness of it gives no footing to such a thought. Who can apprehend that an enraged army should retire upon the opposition of a straw in an infant's hand? Is it the nature of the water? Its retirement is against the natural quality of it; pour but a little upon the ground, and you always see it spread itself: no cause can be rendered in nature; it is a standing monument of the power of God in the preservation of the world, and ought to be more taken notice of by us in this island, surrounded with it, than by some other countries in the world.

Nothing hath power to *preserve itself*. Does not every creature upon earth require the assistance of some other for its maintenance? *Can the rush grow up without mire; can the flag grow up without water?* *Job* 8. 11.

Can man or beast maintain itself without grain from the bowels of the earth? Would not every man fall into the grave, without the aid of other creatures to nourish him? Whence do these creatures receive that virtue of supplying him nourishment, but from the sun and earth; and whence do they derive that virtue, but from the Creator of all things? And should he but slack his hand, how soon would they and all their qualities perish, and the links of the world fall in pieces, and dash one another into their first chaos and confusion? All creatures indeed have an appetite to preserve themselves, they have some knowledge of the outward means for their preservation; so have irrational animals a natural instinct, as well as men, have some skill to avoid things that are hurtful, and apply things that are helpful: but what thing in the world can preserve itself by an inward influx into its own being? All things want such a power without God's *fiat, Let it be so.* There is nothing but is destitute of such a power for its own preservation, as much as it is of a power for its own creation. Were there any true power for such a work, what need of so many external helps from things of an inferior nature to that which is preserved by them?

No created thing hath a power to preserve any decayed being. Who can lay claim to such a virtue, as to recall a withering flower to its former beauty, to raise the head of a drooping plant, or put life into a gasping world when it is expiring; or put impaired vitals into their former posture? Not a man upon earth, nor an angel in heaven, can pretend to such a virtue; they may be spectators, but not assisters, and are all in this case *physicians of no value.*

It is therefore the same power *preserves* all things which at first created them. The creature as much depends upon God in the first instant of its being, for its preservation, as it did when it was nothing, for its creation.* As the continuance of a thought of our mind depends upon the power of our mind, as well as the first framing of that thought. There is as little difference between creating and preserving power, as there is be-

* Lessius de perfect. divin. p. 69.

tween the power of the eye to begin an act of vision and continue that act of vision; as to cast the eye upon an object, and continue it upon that object; as the first act is caused by the eye, so the duration of that act is preserved by the eye; shut the eye and the act of vision ceases; divert the eye from that object, and that act of vision is exchanged for another. And therefore the preservation of things is commonly called a continual creation; and certainly it is no less, if we understand it of a preservation by an inward influence into the being of things. * It is one and the same action invariably continued, and obtaining its force every moment: the same action whereby he created them of nothing, and which every moment hath a virtue to produce a thing out of nothing, if it were not yet extant in the world: it remains the same without any diminution throughout the whole time wherein any thing remained in the world. For all things would return to nothing, if God did not keep them up in the elevation and state to which he at first raised them by his creative power. *In him we live and have our being*, *Acts* 17. 28. By him, or by the same power whence we derived our being, are our lives maintained: as it was his Almighty power whereby we were, after we had been nothing; so it is the same poer whereby we now are, after he hath made us something.

Certainly all things have no less dependance on God, than light upon the sun, which vanisheth upon the withdrawing of the sun. And should God suspend that powerful word, whereby he erected the frame of the world, it would sink down to what it was, before he commanded it to stand up. There needs no new act of power to reduce things to nothing, but the cessation of that omnipotent influx: when the appointed time set them for their being comes to a period, they faint and bend down their heads to their dissolution; they return to their elements and perish. *Thou hidest thy face, and they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die and return to their dust. Psal.* 104. 29. That which was nothing cannot remain on this side nothing, but by the same power that

* Lessius de Sum bon. p. 580, 581, 582.

first called it out of nothing. As when God withdrew his concurring power from the fire, its quality ceased to act upon the three children; so if he withdraws his sustaining power from the creature, its nature will cease to be.

2. It appears in propagation. That powerful word, *increase and multiply, Gen.* 1. 22. 23, pronounced at the first creation, hath spread itself over every part of the world; every animal in the world, in the formation of every one of them. From two of a kind, how great a number of individuals, and single creatures have been multiplied, to cover the face of the earth in their continued succession? What a world of plants spring up from the dry earth, moistened by the influence of a cloud, and warmed by the beams of the sun? How admirable an instance of his propagating power is it, that from a little seed a massy root should strike into the bowels of the earth, a tall body, and thick branches, with leaves and flowers of various colours, should break through the surface of the earth, and mount up towards heaven, when in the seed you neither smell the scent, nor see any firmness of a tree, nor behold any of those colours which you view in the flowers that the years produce. This is a power not to be imitated by any creature. How astonishing is it, that a small seed, whereof many will not amount to the weight of a grain, should spread itself into leaves, bark, and fruit of a vast weight, and multiply itself into millions of seeds? What power is that, that from one man and woman hath multiplied families, and from families stocked the world with people? Consider the living creatures, as formed in the womb of their several kinds; every one is a wonder of power. The Psalmist instances in the forming and propagation of man, *I am fearfully and wonderfully made, marvellous are thy works, Psal.* 139. 14. The forming of the parts distinctly, the bringing forth into the world every particular member, is a roll of wonders, of power. That so fine a structure as the body of man should be polished in *the lower parts of the earth,* as he calls the womb, ver. 15. in so short a time, with members of a various form and usefulness, each labouring in their several functions. Can any man give an

exact account of the manner *how the bones do grow in the womb, Eccles.* 11. 5. This the wisest man cannot search out. It is one of the secret works of an Omnipotent Power, secret in the manner, though open in the effect: so that we must ascribe it to God, as *Job* doth, *Thine hands have made me, and fashioned me together round about, Job* 10. 8. Thy hands which formed heaven, have formed every part, every member, and wrought me like a mighty workman. *The heavens* are said to be *the work of God's hands*, and man is here said to be no less. The forming and propagation of man from that earthly matter, is no less a wonder of power, than the structure of the world from a rude and indisposed matter.* A heathen philosopher descants elegantly upon this. "Dost thou understand," he asks, "the forming of man in the womb; who erected that noble fabric; who carved the eyes, the chrystal windows of light, and the conductors of the body; who bored the nostrils and ears, those loop-holes of scents and sounds; who stretched out and knit the sinews and ligaments for the fastening of every member; who cast the hollow veins, the channels of blood; set and strengthened the bones, the pillars and rafters of the body; who made the heart, the repository of the soul, and formed the lungs like a pipe? What mother, what father wrought these things? No, none but the Almighty God, who made all things according to his pleasure; it is he who propagates this noble piece from a pile of dust. Who is born by his own advice; who gives stature, features, sense, wit, strength, speech, but God?"

It is no less a wonder, that a little infant can live so long before it is born without breathing: and the eduction of it is no less a wonder, than the prior forming, increase, and nourishment of it. What a wonder is it that the life of the infant is not the death of the mother, or the life of the mother the death of the infant. This little creature, when it springs up from such small beginnings by the power of God, grows up to be one of the lords of the world, to have dominion over the creatures, and propa-

* Trismegist. in Serm. Greek in the Temple. p. 57.

gates its kind in the same manner: all this is unaccountable without having recourse to the power of God in the government of the creatures.

And to add to this wonder, consider also what multitudes of formations and births there are at one time all over the world, in every one of which the finger of God is at work; and it will speak an unwearied power. It is admirable in one man, more in a town of men, still more in a greater and larger kingdom, a vaster world; there is a birth for every hour in this city, 168 in a week though the weekly bills mention more. But what is this city to three kingdoms; what three kingdoms to a populous world? Eleven thousand and eighty will make one for every minute in the week; yet what is this to the weekly propagation in all the nations of the universe, besides the generation of all the living creatures in that space, which are the works of God's fingers as well as man? What will be the result of this, but the notion of an inconceivable, unwearied Almightiness, always active, always operating?

3. It appears in the *motions* of all creatures. All things *live and move in him;* by the same power that creatures have their beings, they have their motions: they have not only a being by his powerful command, but they have their continual motion by his powerful concurrence. Nothing can act without the aimighty influx of God, no more than it can exist without the creative word of God. It is true indeed, the ordering of all motion to his holy ends, is an act of wisdom; but the motions itself whereby those ends are attained, is a work of his power.

God as the first cause hath *an influence* in the motions of all second causes. As all the wheels in a clock are moved in their different motions, by the force and strength of the principal and primary wheel; if there be any defect in that, or if that stand still, all the rest languish and stand still the same moment. All creatures are his instruments, his engines, and have no spirit, but what he gives, and what he assists. Whatsoever nature works, God works in that nature; nature is the instrument, God is the supporter, director, and mover of nature; that

what the prophet saith in another case, may be the language of universal nature, *Lord, thou hast wrought all our works in us, Isa. 26. 12.* They are our works subjectively, efficiently, as second causes; God's works originally, concurrently. The sun moved not in the valley of Ajalon for the space of many hours, in the time of Joshua; nor did the fire exercise its consuming quality upon the three children, in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace: he withdrew not his supporting power from their being, for then they had vanished, but his influencing power from their qualities, whereby their motion ceased, till he returned his influential concurrence to them; which evidences, that without a perpetual derivation of divine power, the sun could not run a moment of its race, nor the fire devour one grain of light chaff, or an inch of straw. Nothing without his sustaining power can continue in being; nothing without his co-working power can exercise one mite of those qualities it is possessed of. All creatures are wound up by him, and his hand is constantly upon them, to keep them in perpetual motion.

Consider the *variety of motions in a single creature.* How many motions are there in the vital parts of a man, or in any other animal, which a man knows not, and is unable to number? The renewed motion of the lungs, the systoles and diastoles of the heart; the contractions and dilatations of the heart, whereby it spouts out and takes in blood; the power of concoction in the stomach; the motion of the blood in the veins, &c. All which were not only settled by the powerful hand of God, but are upheld, preserved, and influenced in every distinct motion by that power that stamped them with that nature. To every one of those there is not only the sustaining power of God holding up their natures, but the motive power of God concurring to every motion; for if we move in him as well as live in him, then every particle of our motion is exercised by his concurring power, as well as every moment of our life supported by his preserving power. What an infinite variety of motions is there in the whole world in universal nature, to all which God concurs,

all which he conducts, even the motions of the meanest as well as the greatest creatures, which demonstrate the indefatigable power of the governor. It is an infinite power which acts in so many varieties, whereby the soul forms every thought, the tongue speaks every word, the body exerts every action. What an infinite power is that which presides over the birth of all things, concurs with the motion of the sap in the tree, rivers on the earth, clouds in the air, every drop of rain, fleece of snow, crack of thunder? Not the least motion in the world, but is under an actual influence of this almighty Mover.

And lest any should scruple the concurrence of God to so many varieties of the creature's motion, as a thing utterly inconceivable; let them consider the sun, a natural image and shadow of the perfections of God; does not the power of that finite creature extend itself to various objects at the same moment of time? How many insects does it animate, as flies, &c. at the same moment throughout the world? How many several plants does it erect at its appearance in the spring, whose roots lay mourning in the earth all the foregoing winter? What multitudes of spires of grass, and nobler flowers, does it produce in the same hour? It warms the air, melts the blood, and cherishes living creatures of various kinds, in distinct places, without tiring. And shall the God of this sun be less than his creature?

And since I speak of the sun, consider the power of God *in the motion of it.* * The vastness of the sun is computed to be at least 166 times bigger than the earth, and its distance from the earth, some tell us to be about four millions of miles; whence it follows, that it is whirled about the world with that swiftness, that in the space of an hour it runs a million of miles, which is as much as if it should move round about the surface of the earth fifty times in one hour; which vastness exceeds the swiftness of a ball shot out of a cannon, which is computed to fly not above three miles in a minute: so that the sun

* A Lapide, in 1 cap. Gen. 16. Lessius, de Perfect. divin. p. 90, 91. Lessius, de Providen. p. 633. Voss. de Idol. lib. 2. cap. 2.

runs further in one hour, than a ball can in five thousand, if it were kept in motion; so that if it were near the earth, the swiftness of its motion would shatter the whole frame of the world, and dash it in pieces; well then may the psalmist say, *It runs a race like a strong man*, *Psal.* 19. 5. What an incomprehensible power is that which hath communicated such strength and swiftness to the sun, and daily influences its motion; especially since after all those years of its motion, wherein one would think it should have spent itself, we behold it every day, as vigorous as Adam did in Paradise, without losing any thing of its natural spirits in its unwearied motion. How great must that power be, which hath kept this great body so entire, and thus swiftly moves it every day?

Is it not now an argument of omnipotency, to keep all the strings of nature in tune: to wind them up to a due pitch for the harmony he intended by them; to keep things that are contrary from that confusion they would naturally fall into; to prevent those jarrings which would naturally result from their various and opposite qualities; to preserve every being in its true nature; to propagate every kind of creature; order all the operations, even the meanest of them, when there are such innumerable varieties?

But let us consider, that this power of preserving things in their station and motion, and the renewing of them is more stupendous than that which we commonly call miraculous.

We call those miracles, which are wrought out of the track of nature, and contrary to the usual stream and current of it; which men wonder at, because they seldom see them, and hear of them as things rarely brought forth in the world; when the truth is, there is more of power expressed in the ordinary station and motion of natural causes, than in those extraordinary exertions of power. Is not more power signalized in that whirling motion of the sun every hour for so many ages, than in the suspending of its motion one day, as it was in the days of

Joshua? That fire should continually ravage and consume, and greedily swallow up every thing that is offered to it, seems to be the effect of as admirable a power, as the stopping of its appetite a few moments, as in the case of the three children? * Is not the raising of some small seeds from the ground, with a multiplication of their numerous posterity, an effect of as great a power, as our Saviour's feeding many thousands with a few loaves, by a secret augmentation of them? Is not the chemical producing so pleasant and delicious a fruit as the grape from a dry earth, insipid rain, and a sour vine, as admirable a token of divine power as our Saviour's turning water into wine? Is not the cure of diseases by the application of a simple inconsiderable weed, or a slight infusion, as wonderful in itself, as the cure of it by a powerful word? What if it be naturally designed to heal, what is that nature, who gave that nature, who maintains that nature, who conducts it, and co-operates with it? Does it work of itself, and by its own strength? why not then equally in all, in one as well as another? Miracles indeed affect more, because they testify the immediate operation of God without the concurrence of second causes; not that there is more of the power of God shining in them, than in the other.

II. This power is evident in *moral* government.

1. In the *restraint* of the malicious nature of the *devil.* Since Satan hath the power of an angel, and the malice of a devil, what safety would there be for our persons from destruction, what security for our goods from rifling, by this invisible, potent, and envious spirit, if his power were not restrained and his malice curbed, by one more mighty than himself? How much does he envy God, the glory of his creation, and man the use and benefit of it? How desirous would he be in regard of his passion, how able in regard of his strength and subtlety, to overthrow or infect all worship but what was directed to himself; to manage all things according to his lusts, turn all things topsy-turvy, plague the world, burn cities, houses, plun-

* Faucher, sur Act. vol. 2. p. 47.

der us of the supports of nature, waste kingdoms, &c. if he were not held in a chain as a ravenous lion, or a furious wild horse, by the Creator and Governor of the world? What remedy could be used by man against the activity of this unseen and swift spirit? The world could not subsist under his malice; he would practise the same things upon all as he did upon Job, when he got leave from his governor; turn the swords of men into one another's bowels; send fire from heaven upon the fruits of the earth and the cattle, intended for the use of man; raise winds to shake and tear our houses upon our heads; afflict our bodies with dreadful diseases, and let all the humours in our blood loose upon us. He that envied Adam a paradise, envies us the pleasure of enjoying its out-works. If we were not destroyed by him, we should live in a continued vexation by spectres and apparitions, affrighting sounds and noise, as some think the Egyptians did in that three day's darkness. He would be always winnowing us, as he desired to winnow Peter, *Luke* 22. 31. But God over-masters his strength, that he cannot move a hair's breadth beyond the chain in which he is held; not only he is unable to touch an upright Job, but to lay his fingers upon one of the unbelieving Gadarens' forbidden and filthy swine without special licence. When he is cast out of one place, he walks *through dry places seeking rest*, new objects for his malicious designs, but finding none, till God lets loose the reigns upon him for a new employment, *Mat.* 8. 31. *Luke* 11. 24. Though Satan's power be great, yet God suffers him not to tempt as much as his diabolical appetite would, but as much as divine wisdom thinks fit. And the divine power tempers the other's active malice, and gives the creature victory, where the enemy intended spoil and captivity. How much stronger is God than all the legions of hell, as he that holds a strong man from effecting his purpose, testifies more ability than his adversary? How doth he lock him up for a thousand years in a pond which he cannot leap over? and this restraint is wrought partly by blinding him in his designs, partly by denying him concourse to his motion. As he hindered the active quality of the fire upon

the three children, by withdrawing his power which was necessary to the motion of it; and his power is as necessary for the motion of Satan as for that of any other creature. Sometimes he makes him to confess him against his own interest, as Apollo's oracle confessed.* And though when the devil was cast out of the possessed person, he publicly owned Christ to be the *Holy One of God*, *Mark* 1. 24, to render him suspected by the people of having commerce with the unclean spirits; yet this he could not do without the leave and permission of God, that the power of Christ in stopping his mouth and imposing silence upon him might be evidenced; and that it reaches to the gates of hell, as well as to the quieting of winds and waves. This is a part of the strength as well as the wisdom of God, that *the deceived and the deceiver are his*, *Job* 12. 16. Wisdom to defeat, and power to over-rule his most malicious designs to his own glory.

2. In the *restraint* of the natural corruption of *men.* Since the *impetus* of original corruptions in the blood, conveyed down from Adam to the veins of all his posterity, and universally diffused in all mankind, what wreck and havock would it make in the world if it were not suppressed by this divine power, which presides over the hearts of men? Man is so wretched by nature, that nothing but what is vile and pernicious can drop from him. Man *drinks iniquity like water*, being by nature *abominable and filthy*, *Job* 15. 16. He greedily swallows all matter for iniquity, every thing suitable to the mire and poison in his nature, and would sprout it out with all fierceness and insolence. God himself gives us the description of man's nature, that he hath not one good imagination at any time, *Gen.* 6. 5. And the apostle from the psalmist dilates and comments upon it, *There is none righteous, no not one; their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, their feet are swift to shed blood*, &c. *Rom.* 3. 10, &c. This corruption is equal to all, natural to all; it is not more poisonous or more fierce in one man than

* Cæteros deos æreos esse, &c. Grot. Verit. rel lib. 4

in another. The root of it in all men is the same; all the branches therefore do equally possess the villainous nature of the root. No child of Adam can by natural descent be better than Adam, or have less of baseness and vileness, and venom than Adam. How fruitful would this loathsome lake be in all kind of streams? What unbridled licentiousness and headstrong fury would triumph in the world, if the power of God did not interpose itself to lock down the flood-gates of it? What rooting up of human society would there be; how would the world be drenched in blood, the number of malefactors be greater than that of apprehenders and punishers? How would the prints of natural laws be razed out of the heart, if God should leave human nature to itself? Who can read the first chapter to the *Romans*, ver. 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, without acknowledging this truth, where there is a catalogue of those vices which followed upon God's pulling up the sluices, and letting the malignity of their inward corruption have its natural course? If God did not hold back the fury of man, his garden would be overrun, his vine rooted up; the inclinations of men would hurry them to the worst of wickedness. How great is that power that curbs, bridles, or changes, as many headstrong horses at once and every minute as there are sons of Adam upon the earth? *The floods lift up their waves; the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea than the mighty waves of the sea, Psal.* 93. 3, 4; that doth hush and pen in the turbulent passions of men.

3. In the ordering and framing the hearts of men to *his own ends.* That must be an omnipotent hand that grasps and contains the hearts of all men; the heart of the meanest person as well as of the most towering angel, and turns them as he pleases, and makes them sometimes ignorantly, sometimes knowingly, concur to the accomplishment of his own purposes. When the hearts of men are so numerous, their thoughts so various and different from one another, yet he hath a key to those millions of hearts and with infinite power guided by as infinite wisdom, he draws them into what channels he pleases for his

own ends. Though the Jews had imbrued their hands in the blood of our Savionr, and their rage was yet reeking hot against his followers, God bridled their fury in the church's infancy, till it had got some strength, and cast a terror upon them by the wonders wrought by the apostles: *And fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles*, *Acts* 2. 43. Was there not the same reason in the nature of the works our Saviour wrought to point them to the finger of God and calm their rage? Yet did not the power of God work upon their passions in those miracles, nor stop the impetuousness of the corruption resident in their hearts. Yet now those who had the boldness to attack the Son of God, and nail him to the cross, are frightened at the appearance of twelve unarmed apostles, as the sea seems to be afraid when it approacheth the bounds of the feeble sand. How did God bend the hearts of the Egyptians to the Israelites, and turn them to that point, as to lend their most costly vessels, their precious jewels, and rich garments, to supply those whom they had just before tyrannically loaded with their chains? *Exod.* 3. 21, 22. When a great part of an army came upon Jehoshaphat to destroy him, how doth God touch their hearts, and move them by a secret instinct at once to *depart from him?* 1 *Chro.* 18. 31. As if you should see a numerous sight of birds in a moment turn wing another way, by a sudden and joint consent. When he gave Saul a kingdom, he gave him a spirit fit for government, *and gave him another heart;* 1 *Sam.* 10. 9, and brought the people to submit to his yoke, who a little before wandered about the land upon no nobler employment than the *seeking of asses.* It is no small evidence of the power of God, to make a number of strong and discontented persons, and desirous enough of liberty, to bend their necks under the yoke of government, and submit to the authority of one, and that of their own nature, often weaker and more foolish than the most of them; and many times, an oppressor and invader of their rights. Upon this account David calls God *his fortress, tower, shield,* *Psa.* 144. 1; all terms of strength, in subduing the peo-

ple under him. It is the mighty hand of God, that links princes and people together in the bands of government. The same hand that assuages the waves of the sea, suppresses the tumults of the people.

III. It appears in his *gracious and judicial* government.

1. In his *gracious* government. In the deliverance of his church; he is the *strength of Israel*, and hath protected his little flock in the midst of wolves; and maintained their standing, when the strongest kingdoms have sunk, and the best united states have been broken in pieces. When judgments have ravaged countries and torn up the mighty, as a tempestuous wind hath often done the tallest trees, which seemed to threaten heaven with their tops, and dare the storm with the depth of their roots, when yet the vine and rose bushes have stood firm, and been seen in their beauty next morning. The state of the church hath out-lived the most flourishing monarchies; when there hath been a mighty knot of adversaries combined against her: when the bulls of Bashan have pushed her, and the whole tribe of the dragon have sharpened their weapons, and edged their malice; when the voice was strong, and the hopes high to raze her foundation even with the ground; when hell hath roared; when the wit of the world hath contrived, and the strength of the world hath attempted her ruin; when decrees have been passed against her, and the powers of the world armed for the execution of them; when her friends have drooped and have been concealed in corners; when there was no eye to pity, and no hand to assist, then help hath come from heaven; her enemies have been defeated, kings have brought gifts to her and reared her; tears have been wiped off her cheeks, and her very enemies, by an unseen power, have been forced to court her, whom before they would have devoured quick. The devil and his armies have fled into their den, and the church hath triumphed when she hath been upon the brink of ruin. Thus did God send a mighty angel to be the executioner of Sennacherib's army, and the protector of Jerusalem, who run his sword into the hearts

of eighty thousand, when they were ready to swallow up his beloved city, 2 *Kings* 19. 35.

When the knife was at the throats of the Jews in Shushan, by a powerful hand it was turned into the hearts of their enemies, *Esther* 8. With what outstretched arm were the Israelites freed from the Egyptian yoke? When Pharaoh had mustered a great army to pursue them, assisted with six hundred chariots of war, the Red sea obstructed their passage before, and an enraged enemy trod on their rear; when the fearful Israelites despaired of deliverance, and the insolent Egyptian assured himself of his revenge; God stretches out his irresistible arm, to defeat the enemy and assist his people; he strikes down the wolves, and preserves the flock. God restrained the Egyptian enmity against the Israelites till they were at the brink of the Red sea, and then let them follow their humour and pursue the fugitives, that his power might more gloriously shine forth in the deliverance of the one, and the destruction of the other. God might have brought Israel out of Egypt in the time of those kings, that had remembered the good services of Joseph to their country; but he leaves them till the reign of a cruel tyrant, suffers them to be slaves, that they might by his sole power be conquerors; which had had no appearance, had there been a willing dismission of them at the first summons. *In very deed, for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew my power, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth, Exod.* 9. 16. I have permitted thee to rise up against my people, and keep them in captivity, that thou mightest be an occasion for the manifestation of my power in their rescue; and whilst thou art obstinate to enslave them, I will stretch out my arm to deliver them, and make my name famous among the Gentiles, in the overthrow of thee and thy host in the Red sea. The deliverance of the church hath not been in one age or in one part of the world, but God hath signalized his power in all kingdoms where she hath had a footing; as he hath guided her in all places by one rule, animated

her by one spirit; so he hath protected her by the same arm of power.

When the Roman emperors employed all their force against her for about three hundred years, they were further from effecting her ruin at the end, than when they first attempted it; the church grew under their sword, and was cherished under the wings of the Roman eagle, which were spread to destroy her. The ark was elevated by the deluge; and the waters the devil poured out to drown her, did but prepare the earth for a new increase. She hath sometimes been beaten down, and, like Lazarus, hath seemed to lie in the grave for some days, that the power of God might be more visible in her sudden resurrection, and lifting up her head above the throne of her persecutors.

2. In his *judicial* proceedings. The deluge was no small testimony of his power, in opening the cisterns of heaven, and pulling up the sluices of the sea. He doth but call for the waters of the sea, and they *pour themselves upon the face of the earth*, *Amos* 9. 6. In forty days time, the waters covered the highest mountains fifteen cubits; and by the same power he afterwards reduced the sea to its proper channel, as a roaring lion into his den, *Gen.* 7. 17, 19, 20. A shower of fire from heaven upon Sodom and the cities of the plain, was a signal display of his power, either in creating it on the sudden for the execution of his righteous sentence, or sending down the element of fire, for the punishment of rebels against the light of nature. How often hath he ruined the most flourishing monarchies, led princes away spoiled, and overthrown the mighty? Which Job makes an argument of his strength, *Job* 12. 13, 14. Troops of unknown people, the Goths and Vandals broke the Romans, a warlike people, and hurled down all before them. They could not have had the thought to succeed in such an attempt, unless God had given them strength and motion, for executing his judicial vengeance upon the people of his wrath.

How did he evidence his power by daubing the throne

of Pharaoh, and his chamber of presence, as well as the houses of his subjects, with the slime of frogs, *Exod.* 8. 3; turning their waters into blood, *Exod.* 7. 20; and their dust into lice; raising his militia of locusts against them; causing a three days' darkness without stopping the motion of the sun; taking off their first born, the excellency of their strength, in a night by the stroke of the angel's sword? He takes off the chariot wheels of Pharoah, and presents him with destruction, where he expected victory; brings those waves over the heads of him and his host, which stood firm as marble walls for the safety of his people; the sea is made to swallow them up, that durst not by the order of their governor touch the Israelites. It only sprinkled the one as a type of baptism, and drowned the other as an image of hell. Thus he made it both a deliverer and a revenger, the instrument of an offensive and defensive war. *He brings princes to nothing, and makes the judges of the earth as vanity, Isa.* 40. 23, 24. Great monarchs have by his power been hurled from their thrones, and their sceptres broken before their faces; and they have been advanced, that have had the least hopes of grandeur. He hath plucked up cedars by the roots, lopped off the branches, and set a shrub to grow up in the place; he has dissolved rocks, and established bubbles. *He hath shewed strength with his arm, he hath scattered the proud in the imaginations of their hearts; he hath put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted them of low degree, Luke* 1. 52.

1. He magnifies his power by ordering *the nature* of creatures as he pleases. By restraining their force, or guiding their motions. The restraint of the destructive qualities of the creatures argues as great a power, as the change of their natures, yea and a greater. The qualities of creatures may be changed by art and composition; as in the preparing of medicines; but what but a divine power could restrain the operation of the fire from the three children, while it retained its heat and burning quality in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace? The operation

was curbed while its nature was preserved. All creatures are called his host, because he marshals and ranks them as an army to serve his purposes; the whole scheme of nature is ready to favour men when God orders it, and to punish them when God commissions it. He gave the Red sea but a check, and it obeyed his voice; *He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up, Psal.* 106. 9; the motion of it ceased, and the waters of it were ranged as defensive walls, to secure the march of his people; and at the motion of the hand of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the sea recovered its violence, and the walls that were framed came tumbling down upon the Egyptians' heads, *Exod.* 14. 27. The Creator of nature is not led by the necessity of nature; he that settled the order of nature, can change or restrain the order of nature according to his sovereign pleasure.

The most necessary and useful creatures he can use as instruments of his vengeance; water is necessary to cleanse, and by that he can deface a world; fire is necessary to warm, and by that he can burn a Sodom; from the water he formed the fowl and by that he dissolves them in the deluge; fire or heat is necessary to the generation of creatures, and by that he ruins the cities of the plain. He orders all as he pleases, to perform every tittle and *punctilio* of his purpose. The sea observed him so exactly, that it drowned not one Israelite, nor saved one Egyptian. *There was not one of them left, Psal.* 106. 11. And to perfect the Israelites' deliverance, he followed them with testimonies of his power above the strength of nature. When they wanted drink, he orders Moses to strike a rock, and the rock spouts a river, and a channel is formed for it to attend them in their journey. When they wanted bread, he dressed manna for them in the heavens, and sent it to their tables in the desart. When he would declare his strength, he calls to the heavens to pour down righteousness, and to the earth to bring forth salvation, *Isa.* 45. 8. Though God had created righteousness or deliverance for the Jews in Babylon, yet he calls to the heavens and the

earth to be assistant to the design of Cyrus, whom he had raised for that purpose, as he speaks in the beginning of the chapter, ver. 1, 2, 3, 4.

As God created man for a supernatural end, and all creatures for man as their immediate end; so he makes them according to opportunities, subservient to that supernatural end of man, for which he created him. He that spans the heavens with his fist, can shoot all creatures, like an arrow, to hit what mark he pleases. He that spread the heavens and the earth by a word, and can by a word fold them up more easily than a man can a garment, can order the streams of nature; *Heb.* 1. 12. Cannot he work without nature as well as with it, beyond nature, contrary to nature, that can with a touch of his finger, reduce nature to that nothing whence he drew it? Who can cast down the sun from his throne, clap the distinguished parts of the world together, and make them march in the same order to their confusion, as they did in their creation; who can jumble the whole frame together, and by a word dissolve the pillars of the world, and make the fabric lie in a ruinous heap.

2. He magnifies his power in effecting his purposes by *small means;* in making use of the meanest creatures. As the power of God is seen in the creation of the smallest creatures, and assembling so many perfections in the little body of an insect, as an ant, or spider; so his power is not less magnified in the use he makes of them. As he magnifies his wisdom, by using ignorant instruments; so he exalts his power, by employing weak instruments in his service; the meanness and imperfection of the matter sets off the excellency of the workman; so the weakness of the instrument is a foil to the power of the principal agent. When God hath effected things by means in the scripture, he hath usually brought about his purposes by weak instruments.

Moses, a fugitive from Egypt, and Aaron a captive in it, are the instruments of the Israelites' deliverance. By the motion of the rod of Moses, he works wonders in the court of Pharaoh, and summons up his judgments

against him. He brought down Pharoah's proud spirit for a while by a squadron of lice and locusts, wherein divine power was more seen than if Moses had brought him to his own articles by a multitude of warlike troops. The fall of the walls of Jericho by the sound of rams' horns, was a more glorious character of God's power than if Joshua had battered it down with a hundred of warlike engines. Thus the great army of the Midianites, which lay as grasshoppers upon the ground, were routed by Gideon at the head of three hundred men; and Goliah, a giant, laid level with the ground by David, a stripling, by the force of a sling; a thousand Philistines were dispatched out of the world by the jaw bone of an ass in the hand of Sampson. He can master a stout nation by an army of locusts, and render the teeth of those little insects as destructive as the teeth, yea, the strongest teeth, the cheek-teeth of a great lion, *Joel* 1. 6, 7. The thunderbolt which produces sometimes dreadful effects, is compacted of little atoms which fly in the air, small vapours drawn up by the sun, and mixed with other sulphureous matter and petrifying juice. Nothing is so weak but his strength can make it victorious; nothing so small but by his power he can accomplish his great ends by it; nothing so vile but his might can conduct to his glory; and no nation so mighty but he can waste and enfeeble by the meanest creatures. God is great in power in the greatest things, and not little in the smallest; his power in the minutest creatures which he uses for his service, surmounts the force of our understanding.

PART VI.

THE POWER OF GOD IN REDEMPTION.

The person of the Redeemer—Conception—Union of two natures—Propagation of the gospel—Nature of its doctrines—Instruments employed—Means of propagation—Its success—Power of God in applying redemption—Planting grace—Pardoning sin—Preservation to eternal life.

III. THE power of God appears in *redemption.* As our Saviour is called the *wisdom of God,* so he is called *the power of God,* 1 *Cor.* 1. 24. The arm of power was lifted up as high as the designs of wisdom were laid deep. As this way of redemption could not be contrived but by an infinite wisdom; so it could not be accomplished but by an infinite power. None but God could shape such a design, and none but God could effect it. The divine power in temporal deliverances and freedom from the slavery of human oppressors, veils to that which glitters in redemption; whereby Satan is defeated in his designs, stripped of his spoils, and yoked in his strength. The power of God in creation requires not those degrees of admiration, as in redemption. In creation the world was erected from nothing; as there was nothing to act, so there was nothing to oppose; no victorious devil was in that to be subdued, no thundering law to be silenced,

no death to be conquered, no transgression to be pardoned and rooted out, no hell to be shut, no ignominious death upon the cross to be suffered. It had been in the nature of the thing, an easier thing to divine power to have created a new world than to have repaired a broken, and purified a polluted one. This is the most admirable work that ever God brought forth in the world, greater than all the marks of his power in the first creation.

And this will appear, First, in the *Person* redeeming.

First, in his conception. *He was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin. The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, Luke* 1. 35; which act is expressed to be the effect of the infinite power of God; and it expresses the supernatural manner of the forming the humanity of our Saviour, and signifies not the divine nature of Christ infusing itself into the womb of the Virgin; for the angel refers it to the manner of the operation of the Holy Ghost in the producing the human nature of Christ, and not to the nature assuming that humanity into union with itself. The Holy Ghost, or the third person in the Trinity overshadowed the Virgin, and by a creative act framed the humanity of Christ, and united it to the divinity. It is therefore expressed by a word of the same import with that used *Gen.* 1. 2, *The Spirit moved upon the face of the waters*, which signifies a brooding upon the chaos, shadowing it with his wings, as hens sit upon their eggs to form them and hatch them into animals; or else it is an allusion to the *cloud* which *covered the tent of the congregation*, when *the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle, Exod.* 40. 34. It was not such a creative act as we call immediate, which is a production out of nothing; but a mediate creation, such as God's bringing things into form out of the first matter, which had nothing but an obediential or passive disposition to whatsoever stamp the powerful wisdom of God should imprint upon it. So the substance of the Virgin had no active, but only a passive disposition to this work.

The matter of the body was earthy, the substance of the Virgin; the forming of it was heavenly, the Holy Ghost working upon that matter. And therefore when it is said, that *she was found with child of the Holy Ghost*, *Mat.* 1. 18, it is to be understood of the efficacy of the Holy Ghost, not of the substance of the Holy Ghost. The matter was natural, but the manner of conceiving was supernatural, above the methods of nature. In reference to the active principle, the Redeemer is called in the prophecy, *The branch of the Lord*, *Isa.* 4. 2, in regard of the divine hand that planted him; in respect to the passive principle, he is called *The fruit of the earth*, in regard to the womb that bare him; and therefore said to be *made of a woman*, *Gal.* 4. 4. That part of the flesh of the Virgin whereof the human nature of Christ was made, was refined and purified from corruption by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, as a skilful workman separates the dross from the gold: our Saviour is therefore called, *that holy thing*, *Luke* 1. 35, though born of the Virgin. He was necessarily some way to descend from Adam. God indeed might have created his body out of nothing, or have formed it, as he did Adam's, out of the dust of the ground. But had he been thus extraordinarily formed, and not propagated from Adam, though he had been a man like one of us, yet he would not have been of kin to us, because it would not have been a nature derived from Adam, the common parent of us all.* It was therefore necessary to an affinity with us, not only that he should have the same human nature, but that it should flow from the same principle, and be propagated to him. But now, by this way of producing the humanity of Christ of the substance of the Virgin, he was in Adam (say some) corporally, but not seminally; of the substance of Adam or a daughter of Adam, but not of the seed of Adam. And so he is of the same nature that had sinned, and so what he did and suffered may be imputed to us, which, had he been created as Adam, could not be claimed in a legal and judicial way.

* Amyrald. in Symbol. p. 103. &c.

It was not convenient he should be born in the common order of nature, of father and mother: for whosoever is so born is polluted: a *clean thing cannot be brought out of an unclean, Job* 14. 4. And our Saviour had been incapable of being a Redeemer, had he been tainted with the least spot of our nature, but would have stood in need of redemption himself. Besides, it had been inconsistent with the holiness of the Divine Nature, to have assumed a tainted and defiled body. He that was the fountain of blessedness to all nations, was not to be subject to the curse of the law for himself; which he would have been had he been conceived in an ordinary way. He that was to overturn Satan's empire, was not to be any way captive under the devil's power, as a creature under the curse; nor could he be able to break the serpent's head, had he been tainted with the serpent's breath.

Again, supposing that Almighty God by his divine power had so ordered the matter, and so perfectly sanctified an earthly father and mother from all original spot, that the human nature might have been transmitted immaculate to him, as well as the Holy Ghost did purge that part of the flesh of the virgin of which the body of Christ was made; yet it was not convenient that that person, that was *God blessed for ever*, as well as man, partaking of our nature, should have a conception in the same manner as ours, but different, and in some measure conformable to the infinite dignity of his person; which could not have been, had not a supernatural power and a divine person been concerned as an active principle in it. Besides, such a birth had not been agreeable to the first promise, which calls him *The seed of the woman*, not of the man; and so the veracity of God had suffered some detriment: the *seed of the woman, Gen.* 1, 15, only, is set in opposition to the *seed of the serpent.*

By this manner of conception, the holiness of his nature is secured, and his fitness for his office is assured to us. It is now a pure and unpolluted humanity that is the temple and tabernacle of the Divinity. The *fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily*, and dwells in him ho-

lily. His humanity is supernaturalized, and elevated by the activity of the Holy Ghost, hatching the flesh of the virgin into man, as the chaos into a world. Though we read of some sanctified from the womb, it was not a pure and perfect holiness; it was like the light of fire mixed with smoke, an infused holiness accompanied with natural taint: but the holiness of the Redeemer by this conception, is like the light of the sun, pure and without spot. The spirit of holiness supplying the place of a father in a way of creation.

His fitness for his office is also assured to us; for being born of the virgin, one of our nature, but conceived by the Spirit, a divine person, the guilt of our sins may be imputed to him because of our nature, without the stain of sin inherent in him; because of his supernatural conception he is capable, as one of kin to us, to bear our curse, without being touched by our taint. By this means our sinful nature is assumed without sin in that nature which was assumed by him: flesh he hath, but not *sinful flesh*, *Rom.* 8. 3. Real flesh, but not really sinful; only by way of imputation.

Nothing but the power of God is evident in this whole work: by the ordinary laws and course of nature a virgin could not bear a son; nothing but a supernatural and almighty grace could intervene to make so holy and perfect a conjunction. * The generation of others in an ordinary way, is by male and female: but the virgin is overshadowed *by the spirit and power of the Highest*. Man only is the product of natural generation; this which is born of the virgin is the holy thing, the Son of God. In other generations a rational soul is only united to a material body; but in this, the Divine Nature is united with the human in one person by an indissoluble union.

The *second* act of power in the person redeeming, is *the union of the two natures*, the divine and human. The designing indeed of this was an act of wisdom; but the accomplishing it was an act of power.

1. There is in this redeeming person a union of *two*

* Amyrant. sur Timole, p. 292.

natures. He is God and man in one person. *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness*, &c. *Heb.* 1. 8, 9. The Son is called God, having a throne *for ever and ever*, and the unction speaks him man: the Godhead cannot be anointed, nor hath any fellows. Humanity and divinity are ascribed to him, *He was of the seed of David, according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God, by his resurrection from the dead, Rom.* 1. 3, 4. The divinity and humanity are both prophetically joined. *I will pour out my Spirit, Zach.* 12. 10. The pouring forth the Spirit is an act only of divine grace and power. *And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced;* the same person pours forth the Spirit as God, and is *pierced* as man. *The Word was made flesh, John* 1. 14. Word from eternity was made flesh in time, word and flesh in one person; a great God, and a little infant.

2. The *terms* of this union were infinitely distant, What greater distance can there be than between the Deity and humanity, between the Creator and the creature? Can you imagine the distance between eternity and time, infinite power and miserable infirmity, an immortal spirit and dying flesh, the Highest Being and nothing? yet these are espoused. A God of unmixed blessedness is linked personally with a man of perpetual sorrows; life incapable of death, joined to a body in that œconomy incapable of life without dying first; infinite purity, and a reputed sinner; eternal blessedness with a cursed nature; almightiness and weakness, omniscience and ignorance, immutability and changeableness, incomprehensibleness and comprehensibility; that which cannot be comprehended, and that which can be comprehended; that which is entirely independent, and that which is totally dependent; the Creator forming all things, and the creature made meet together to a personal union; *The Word made flesh, John* 1. 14. the eternal Son, the seed of Abraham, *Heb.* 2. 16. What more miraculous than for God to become man, and man to become God? That a person possessed of all the perfections of the Godhead, should inherit all the imperfections of the manhood in one

person, sin only excepted: a holiness incapable of sinning to be *made sin, God blessed for ever,* taking the properties of human nature, and human nature admitted to a union with the properties of the Creator. The fulness of the Deity and the emptiness of man united together, not by a shining of the Deity upon the humanity, as the light of the sun upon the earth, but by an inhabitation or indwelling of the Deity in the humanity. Was there not need of an infinite power to bring together terms so far asunder, to elevate the humanity to be capable of, and disposed for a conjunction with the Deity? If a clod of earth should be advanced to, and united with the body of the sun, such an advance would evidence itself to be a work of Almighty power; the clod hath nothing in its own nature to render it so glorious, no power to climb up to so high a dignity; how little would such a union be, to that we are speaking of? Nothing less than an incomprehensible power could effect, what an incomprehensible wisdom did project in this affair.

3. Especially since the union is so *strait.* It is not such a union as is between a man and his house he dwells in, whence he goes out and to which he returns, without any alteration of himself or his house; nor such a union as is between a man and his garment, which both communicate and receive warmth from one another; nor such as is between an artificer and his instrument wherewith he works; nor such a union as one friend hath with another: all these are distant things, not one in nature, but have distinct subsistences. Two friends, though united by love, are distinct persons; a man and his clothes, an artificer and his instruments, have distinct subsistences: but the humanity of Christ hath no subsistence, but in the person of Christ.

The straitness of this union is expressed, and may be somewhat conceived, by the union of fire with iron; "fire pierceth through all the parts of iron, it unites itself with every particle, bestows a light, heat, purity upon all of it; you cannot distinguish the iron from the fire, or the fire from the iron, yet they are distinct natures: so the Deity is united to the whole humanity, seasons it, and

bestows an excellency upon it, yet the natures still remain distinct. And as during that union of fire with iron, the iron is incapable of rust or blackness; so is the humanity incapable of sin: and as the operation of fire is attributed to the red-hot iron, (as the iron may be said to heat, burn, and the fire may be said to cut and pierce,) yet the imperfections of the iron do not affect the fire; so in this mystery, those things which belong to the divinity are ascribed to the humanity, and those things which belong to the humanity are ascribed to the divinity, in regard of the person in whom those natures are united; yet the imperfections of the humanity do not hurt the divinity." The divinity of Christ is as really united with the humanity, as the soul with the body: the person was one, though the natures were two, so united, that the sufferings of the human nature were the sufferings of that person, and the dignity of the divine was imputed to the human, by reason of that unity of both in one person: hence the blood of the human nature is said to be the *blood of God*, *Acts* 20. 28. * All things ascribed to the Son of God, may be ascribed to this man; and the things ascribed to this man, may be ascribed to the Son of God, as this man is the Son of God Eternal, Almighty: and it may be said, God suffered, was crucified, &c. for the person of Christ is but one, most simple; the person suffered, that was God and man united, making one person.

4. And though the union be so strait, yet without *confusion* of the natures, or *change* of them into one another. † The two natures of Christ are not mixed, as liquors that incorporate with one another when they are poured into a vessel; the divine nature is not turned into the human, nor the human into divine, one nature doth not swallow up another and make a third nature, distinct from each of them. The Deity is not turned into the humanity, as air (which is next to a spirit) may be thickened and turned into water, and water may be rarified into air by the power of heat boiling it. The Deity cannot be changed,

* Lessius, p. 103, 104.

† Lessius, ut antea, p. 103, 104. Amyrald. Irenic. p. 284.

because the nature of it is to be unchangeable: it would not be Deity, if it were mortal and capable of suffering. The humanity is not changed into the Deity, for then Christ could not have been a sufferer: if the humanity had been swallowed up into the Deity, it had lost its own distinct nature and put on the nature of the Deity, and consequently had then been incapable of suffering: finite can never by any mixture be changed into infinite, nor infinite into finite.

This union in this regard may be resembled to the union of light and air, which are strictly joined; for light passes through all parts of the air, but they are not confounded, but remain in their distinct essences as before the union, without the least confusion with one another.

* The divine nature remains as it was before the union, entire in itself, only the divine person assumes another nature to himself. The human nature remains, as it would have done had it existed separately from the Λόγος except that then it would have had a proper subsistence by itself, which now it borrows from its union with the Λόγος, or *word;* but that doth not belong to the constitution of its nature.

Now let us consider, what a wonder of power is all this: the uniting a noble soul to a body of clay was not so great an exploit of omnipotence, as the espousing infinite and finite together. Man is further distant from God, than man from nothing. What a wonder is it, that two natures infinitely distant, should be more intimately united than any thing in the world, and yet without any confusion? that the same person should have both glory and grief; an infinite joy in the Deity, and an inexpressible sorrow in the humanity? that a God upon a throne should be an infant in a cradle; the thundering Creator be a weeping babe, and a suffering man; these are such expressions of mighty power, as well as condescending love, that they astonish men upon earth, and angels in heaven.

3. Power was evident in the *progress* of his life. In

* Amyrald. Irenic. p. 282.

the miracles he wrought; how often did he expel malicious and powerful devils from their habitations; hurl them from their thrones, and make them fall from heaven *like lightning?* how many wonders were wrought by his bare word, or a single touch? sight restored to the blind, and hearing to the deaf; palsied members restored to the exercise of their functions; a dismissal given to many deplorable maladies, impure leprosies chased from the persons they had infected, and bodies beginning to putrify raised from the grave. But the mightiest argument of power was his patience. That he who was in his divine nature elevated above the world, should so long continue upon a dung-hill, endure the *contradiction of sinners against himself;* be patiently subject to the reproaches and indignities of men, without displaying that justice which was essential to the Deity, and in an especial manner daily merited by their provoking crimes. The patience of man under great affronts, is a greater argument of power, than the strength of his arm: a strength employed in the revenge of every injury, signifies, a greater infirmity in the soul, than there can be ability in the body.

4. Divine power was apparent in his *resurrection.* The sending of the whale for the deliverance of Jonah; the rescue of Daniel from the den of lions; and the restraining the fire from burning the three children, were signal declarations of his power, and types of the resurrection of our Saviour. But what are those to that which was represented by them? That was a power over natural causes, a curbing of beasts, and restraining of elements; but in the resurrection of Christ, God exercised a power over himself, and quenched the flames of his own wrath, hotter than millions of Nebuchadnezzar's furnaces; unlocked the prison doors, wherein the curses of the law had lodged our Saviour, stronger than the ribs of a Leviathan. In the rescue of Daniel and Jonah, God overpowered beasts; and in this tore up the strength of the old serpent, and plucked the sceptre from the hand of the enemy of mankind. The work of resurrection indeed, considered in itself, requires the efficacy of an

almighty power: neither man nor angel can create new dispositions in a dead body, to render it capable of lodging a spiritual soul; nor can they restore a dislodged soul, by their own power, to such a body. The restoring a dead body to life requires an infinite power, as well as the creation of the world: but there was in the resurrection of Christ something more difficult than this; while he lay in the grave he was under the curse of the law, under the execution of that dreadful sentence, *thou shalt die the death*. His resurrection was not only the re-tying the marriage knot between his soul and body, or the rolling the stone from the grave; but taking off an infinite weight, the sin of mankind, which lay upon him: so vast a weight could not be removed without the strength of an almighty arm. It is therefore ascribed, not to an ordinary operation, but an operation with power, * and such a power wherein the glory of the Father did appear. *Raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father*, Rom. 6. 4, that is, the glorious power of God. As the eternal generation is stupendous, so is his resurrection, which is called, a new begetting of him, *Acts* 13. 33. It is a wonder of power, that the divine and human nature should be joined; and no less wonder, that his person should surmount and rise up from the curse of God, under which he lay. The apostle therefore adds one expression to another, and heaps up a variety, signifying thereby that one was not enough to represent it, *Exceeding greatness of power, and working of mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead*, *Eph.* 1. 19. It was an hyperbole of power, the excellency of the mightiness of his strength; the loftiness of the expressions seems to come short of the apprehension he had of it in his soul.

Secondly, This power appears in the *publication and propagation* of the doctrine of redemption. And the divine power will appear, if you consider,

(1.) The *nature of the doctrine*. It was contrary to the common received *reason of the world*. The philoso-

* Rom. 1. 45.

phers, the masters of knowledge among the Gentiles, had maxims of a different stamp from it. Though they agreed in the being of a God, yet their notions of his nature were confused and embroiled with many errors; the unity of God was not commonly assented to: they had multiplied deities according to the fancies they had received from some of a more elevated wit and refined understanding than others. Though they had some notion of mediators, yet they placed in those seats their public benefactors; men that had been useful to the world, or their particular countries, in imparting to them some profitable invention. To discard those, was to charge themselves with ingratitude to them, from whom they had received signal benefits, and to whose mediation, conduct, or protection, they ascribed all the success they had been blessed with in their several provinces; and to charge themselves with folly, for rendering an honour and worship to them so long. Could the doctrine of a crucified Mediator, whom they had never seen, that had conquered no country for them, never enlarged their territories, brought to light no new profitable invention for the increase of their earthly welfare, as the rest had done, be thought sufficient to balance so many of their reputed heroes? How ignorant were they in the foundations of the true religion? The belief of a providence was staggering; nor had they a true prospect of the nature of virtue and vice: yet they had a fond opinion of the strength of their own reason, and the maxims that had been handed down to them by their predecessors, which Paul entitles, a *science falsely so called*, either meant of the philosophers or the gnostics. They presumed that they were able to measure all things by their own reason; whence, when the apostle came to preach the doctrine of the gospel at Athens, the great school of reason in that age, they gave him no better a title than that of a *babbler*, *Acts* 17. 18. and *openly mocked him*, verse 32, a seed gatherer, * one that hath no more sense, than a fellow that gathers up seeds that are spilt in a market, or one that hath a vain and empty sound.

* Σπερμολόγος.

without sense or reason, like a foolish mountebank: so slightly did those rationalists of the world think of the wisdom of heaven. That the Son of God should veil himself in a mortal body, and suffer a disgraceful death in it, were things above the ken of reason.

Besides, the world had a general disesteem of the religion of the Jews, and were prejudiced against any thing that came from them. Whence the Romans that used to incorporate the gods of other conquered nations in their capitol, never moved to have the God of Israel worshipped among them. Again they might argue against it with much fleshly reason: here is a crucified God preached by a company of mean and ignorant persons; what reason can we have to entertain this doctrine, since the Jews, who, as they tell us, had the prophecies of him, did not acknowledge him? Surely, had there been such predictions, they would not have crucified, but crowned their king, and expected from him the conquest of the earth under their power? What reason have we to entertain him, whom his own nation, among whom he lived, with whom he conversed, so unanimously rejected? It was impossible to conquer minds possessed with so many errors, and applauding themselves in their own reason, and to render them capable of receiving revealed truths without the influence of a divine power.

It was contrary to the *customs of the world.* The strength of custom in most men surmounts the strength of reason, and men commonly are so wedded to it, that they will be sooner divorced from any thing, than the modes and patterns received from their ancestors. The endeavouring to change customs of an ancient standing, has occasioned tumults and furious mutinies among nations, though the change would have been much for their advantage. This doctrine struck at the root of the religion of the world, and the ceremonies wherein they had been educated from their infancy, delivered to them from their ancestors, confirmed by the customary observance of many ages, rooted in their minds, and established by their laws. *This fellow persuadeth us to worship God contrary to the law, Acts* 18. 13, against customs, to

which they ascribed the happiness of their states, and the prosperity of their people; and would put in the place of this religion they would abolish, a new one instituted by a man whom the Jews had condemned, and put to death upon a cross, as an impostor, blasphemer, and seditious person.

It was a doctrine that would change the customs of the Jews, who were instrusted with the oracles of God. It would bury for ever their ceremonial rites, delivered to them by Moses from that God, who had with a mighty hand brought them out of Egypt, consecrated their law with thunders and lightnings from mount Sinai, at the time of its publication, backed it with severe sanctions, confirmed it by many miracles, both in the wilderness and their Canaan, and had continued it for so many hundred years. They could not but remember how they had been ravaged by other nations, and judgments sent upon them when they neglected and slighted it; and with what great success they were followed when they valued and observed it; and how they had abhorred the author of this new religion, who had spoken slightly of their traditions, till they put him to death with infamy. Was it an easy matter to divorce them from that worship, upon which were entailed, as they imagined, their peace, plenty, and glory, things of the dearest regard with mankind? The Jews were no less devoted to their ceremonial traditions, than the heathen were to their vain superstitions.

The doctrine of the gospel was of that nature, that the state of religion all over the earth must be overturned by it; the wisdom of the Greeks must veil to it, the idolatry of the people must stoop to it, and the profane customs of men must moulder under the weight of it. Was it an easy matter for the pride of nature to deny a customary wisdom, to entertain a new doctrine against the authority of their ancestors; to inscribe folly upon that which hath made them admired by the rest of the world? Nothing can be of greater esteem with men, than the credit of their law-givers and founders, the religion of their fathers, and prosperity of themselves; hence the minds of men were sharpened against it. The Greeks, the wisest na-

tion, slighted it as foolish; the Jews, the religious nation, stumbled at it, as contrary to the received interpretations of antient prophecies and carnal conceits of an earthly glory. The dimmest eye may behold the difficulty to change custom, a second nature. It is as hard as to change a wolf into a lamb, to level a mountain, stop the course of the sun, or change the inhabitants of Africa into the colour of Europe. Custom dips men in as durable a dye as nature. The difficulties of carrying it on against the divine religion of the Jews, and rooted customs of the Gentiles, were unconquerable by any but an almighty power. And in this the power of God hath appeared wonderfully.

It was contrary to the *sensuality of the world*, and the lusts of the flesh. How much the Gentiles were overgrown with base and unworthy lusts at the time of the publication of the gospel, needs no other memento than the apostle's discourse, *Rom.* 1. As there was no error but prevailed upon their minds, so there was no brutish affection but was wedded to their hearts. The doctrine proposed to them was not easy; it flattered not the sense, but checked the stream of nature. It thundered down those three great engines whereby the devil had subdued the world to himself, *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.* Not only the most sordid affections of the flesh, but the more refined gratifications of the mind; it stripped nature both of devil and man; of what was commonly esteemed great and virtuous. That which was the root of their fame, and the satisfaction of their ambition, was struck at by this axe of the gospel. The first article of it ordered them to deny themselves, not to presume upon their own worth; to lay their understandings and wills at the foot of the cross, and resign them up to one newly crucified at Jerusalem; honours and wealth were to be despised, flesh to be tamed, the cross to be borne, enemies to be loved, revenge not to be satisfied, blood to be spilt, and torments to be endured for the honour of one they never saw, nor ever before heard of; who was preached with the circumstances of a shameful death, enough to affright

them from the entertainment; and the report of a resurrection and glorious ascension were things never heard of by them before, and unknown in the world, that would not easily enter into the belief of men; the cross, disgrace, self-denial, were only discoursed of in order to the attainment of an invisible world, and an unseen reward which none of their predecessors ever returned to acquaint them with; a patient death, contrary to the pride of nature, was published as the way to happiness and a blessed immortality; the dearest lusts were to be pierced to death for the honour of this new Lord. Other religions brought wealth and honour; this struck them off from such expectations, and presented them with no promise of any thing in this life, but a prospect of misery; except those inward consolations to which before they had been utter strangers, and had never experimented. It made them to depend not upon themselves, but upon the sole grace of God. It decried all natural, all moral idolatry, things as dear to men as the apple of their eyes. It despoiled them of whatsoever the mind, will, and affections of men naturally lay claim to, and glory in. It pulled self up by the roots, unmanned carnal man, and debased the principle of honour and self-satisfaction, which the world counted at that time noble and brave. In a word, it took them off from themselves, to act like creatures of God's framing; to know no more than he would admit them, and do no more than he did command them. How difficult must it needs be to reduce men, that placed all their happiness in the pleasures of this life, from their pompous idolatry and brutish affections, to this mortifying religion? What might the world say? Here is a doctrine will render us a company of puling animals; farewel generosity, bravery, sense of honour, courage in enlarging the bounds of our country, for an ardent charity to the bitterest of our enemies, Here is a religion will rust our swords, canker our arms, dispirit what we have hitherto called virtue, and annihilate what hath been esteemed worthy and comely among mankind. Must we change conquest for suffering, the increase of our reputation for self-denial,

the natural sentiment of self-preservation for affecting a dreadful death? How impossible was it that a crucified Lord, and a crucifying doctrine, should be received in the world without the mighty operation of a divine power upon the hearts of men? And in this also the almighty power of God did notably shine forth.

II. Divine power appeared in the *instruments* employed for the publishing and propagating the gospel. Who were,

1. *Mean* and *worthless* in themselves. Not noble and dignified with an earthly grandeur, but of a low condition, meanly bred; so far from any splendid estates, that they possessed nothing but their nets; without any credit and reputation in the world; without comeliness and strength; as unfit to subdue the world by preaching, as an army of hares were to conquer it by war. Not learned doctors bred up at the feet of the famous rabbies at Jerusalem, whom Paul calls *the princes of the world;* nor nursed up in the school of Athens, under the philosophers and orators of the time; not the wise men of Greece, but the fishermen of Galilee; naturally skilled in no langnage but their own, and no more exact in that than those of the same condition in any other nation; ignorant of every thing but the language of their lakes and their fishing trade; except Paul, called some time after the rest to that employment: and after the descent of the Spirit, they were ignorant and unlearned in every thing but the doctrine they were commanded to publish; for the council before whom they were summoned, proved them to be so, which increased their wonder at them, *Acts* 4. 13. Had it been published by a voice from heaven, that twelve poor men, taken out of boats and creeks, without any help of learning, should conquer the world to the cross, it might have been thought an illusion against all the reason of men; yet we know it was undertaken and accomplished by them. They published this doctrine in Jerusalem, and quickly spread it over the greatest part of the world. Folly outwitted wisdom, and weakness overpowered strength. The conquest of the east by Alexander was

not so admirable as the enterprise of those poor men. He attempted his conquest with the hands of a warlike nation, though indeed but a small number of thirty thousand against multitudes, many hundred thousands of the enemies; yet an effeminate enemy; a people inured to slaughter and victory attacked great numbers, but enfeebled by luxury and voluptuousness. Besides, he was bred up to such enterprises, had a learned education under the best philosopher, and a military education under the best commander, and a natural courage to animate him. These instruments had no such advantage from nature; the heavenly treasure was placed in those earthen vessels, as Gideon's lamps in empty pitchers, *Judges* 7. 16, that the *excellency* or hyperbole *of the power of God might be of God*, 2 *Cor*. 4. 7, and the strength of his arm be displayed in the infirmity of the instruments. They were destitute of earthly wisdom, and therefore despised by the Jews, and derided by the Gentiles; the publishers were accounted madmen, and the embracers fools. Had they been men of known natural endowments, the power of God had been veiled under the gifts of the creature.

2. Therefore a divine power suddenly *inspired* them, and *fitted* them for so great a work. Instead of ignorance they had the knowledge of the tongues; and they that were scarce well skilled in their own dialect, were instructed on the sudden to speak the most flourishing languages of the world, and discourse to the people of several nations, the *great things of God*, *Acts* 2. 11. Though they were not enriched with any worldly wealth and possessed nothing, yet they were so sustained that they wanted nothing in any place where they came, a table was spread for them in the midst of their bitterest enemies. Their fearfulness was turned into courage, and they that a few days before skulked in corners for fear of the Jews, *John* 20. 19, speak boldly in the name of that Jesus, whom they had seen put to death by the power of the rulers and the fury of the people; they reproach them with the murder of their Master, and outbrave that great people in the midst of their temple,

with the glory of that person they had so lately crucified, *Acts* 2. 23. and 3. 13. Peter that was not long before qualmed at the presence of a maid, was not daunted at the presence of the council, that had their hands yet reeking with the blood of his Master; but being filled with the Holy Ghost, seems to dare the power of the priests and Jewish governors, and is as confident in the council chamber, as he had been cowardly in the high-priest's hall, the efficacy of grace triumphing over the fearfulness of nature, *Acts* 4. 9. &c. Whence should this ardour and zeal, to propagate a doctrine that had already borne the scars of the people's fury be, but from a mighty power, which changed those hares into lions, and stripped them of their natural cowardice to clothe them with a divine courage; making them in a moment both wise and magnanimous, alienating them from any consultations with flesh and blood? As soon as ever the Holy Ghost came upon them *as a mighty rushing wind*, they move up and down for the interest of God; as fish, after a great clap of thunder, are roused, and move more nimbly on the top of the water; therefore that which so fitted them for this undertaking is called *power from on high*, *Luke* 24. 49.

III. The divine power appears in the *means* whereby it was propagated.

It was propagated by means *different* from the methods of the world. Not by force of arms, as some religions have taken root in the world. Mahomet's horse hath trampled upon the heads of men, to imprint an alcoran in their brains, and robbed men of their goods to plant their religion. But the apostles bore not this doctrine through the world upon the points of their swords; they presented a bodily death, where they would bestow an immortal life: they employed not troops of men in a warlike posture, which had been possible for them after the gospel was once spread; they had no ambition to subdue men unto themselves, but to God; they coveted not the possessions of others; designed not to enrich themselves; invaded not the rights of princes, nor the liberties and properties of the people; they rifled them

not of their estates, nor scared them into this religion by a fear of losing their worldly happiness. The arguments they used would naturally drive them from an entertainment of this doctrine, rather than allure them to be proselytes to it: their design was to change their hearts, not their government; to wean them from the love of the world to a love of a Redeemer; to remove that which would ruin their souls. It was not to enslave them, but ransom them; they had a *warfare*, but not with *carnal weapons*, but such as were *mighty through God for the pulling down of strong holds*, 2 *Cor*. 10. 4, they used no weapons but the doctrine they preached. Others that have not gained conquests by the edge of the sword and the stratagems of war, have extended their opinions to others by the strength of human reason, and the insinuations of eloquence. But the apostles had as little flourish in their tongues, as edge upon their swords: their preaching was *not with the enticing words of man's wisdom;* their presence was mean, and their discourses without varnish; their doctrine was plain, a crucified Christ; a doctrine ungarnished, and altogether unsuited to the taste of the world; but they had the *demonstrations of the spirit*, and a mighty *power* for their companion in the work. The doctrine they preached, viz. the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, are called the *powers*, not of this world, but *of the world to come*, *Heb*. 6. 5. No less than a supernatural power could conduct them in this attempt, with such weak methods in human appearance.

The gospel was propagated against all the *force*, *power*, and *wit* of the world. The divisions in the eastern empire, and the feeble and consuming state of the western, contributed to Mahomet's success.* But never was Rome in a more flourishing condition: learning, eloquence, wisdom, strength were at the highest pitch. Never was there a more diligent watch against any innovations; never was that state governed by more severe and suspicious princes than at the time when Ti-

* Daille, 15. Serm. p. 57.

berias and Nero held the reins. No time seemed to be more unfit for the entrance of a new doctrine than that age wherein it began to be first published; never did any religion meet with that opposition from men. Idolatry hath been often settled without any contest; but this hath suffered the same fate with the Institutor of it, and endured the contradictions of sinners against itself. And those that published it, were not only without any worldly support, but exposed themselves to the hatred and fury, to the racks and tortures of the strongest powers on earth. It never set foot in any place, but the country was in an uproar, *Acts* 19. 28. Swords were drawn to destroy it; laws were made to suppress it; prisons provided for the professors of it; fires kindled to consume them; and executioners had perpetual employment to stifle the progress of it.

Rome, in the conquest of countries, changed not the religion, rites, and modes of their worship. They altered their civil government, but left them to the liberty of their religion, and many times joined with them in the worship of their peculiar gods; and sometimes imitated them at Rome, instead of abolishing them in the cities they had subdued. But all their councils were assembled, and their force was bandied *against the Lord and against his Christ;* and that city that kindly received all manner of superstitions, hated this doctrine with an irreconcileable hatred. It met with reproaches from the wise, and fury from the potentates; it was derided by the one as the greatest folly, and persecuted by the other as contrary to God and mankind; the one were afraid to lose their esteem by the doctrine, and the other to lose their authority by a sedition they thought a change of religion would introduce. The Romans, that had been conquerors of the earth, feared intestine commotions, and the falling asunder the links of their empire. Scarce any of their first emperors but had their swords dyed red in the blood of the Christians. The flesh with all its lusts, the world with all its flatteries, the statesmen with all their craft, and the mighty with all their strength, joined together to extirpate it. Though many members were taken off by the fires,

yet the church not only lived but flourished in the furnace. Converts were made by the death of martyrs, and the flames which consumed their bodies, were the occasion of firing men's hearts with a zeal for the profession of it. Instead of being extinguished, the doctrine shone more bright, and multiplied under the sickles that were employed to cut it down. God ordered every circumstance so, both in the persons that published it, the means whereby, and the time when, that nothing but his power might appear in it, without any thing to dim and darken it.

IV. The divine power was conspicuous in the *great success* it had under all those difficulties. Multitudes were prophesied of to embrace it; whence Isaiah, after the prophecy of the death of Christ, *Isa.* 53, calls upon the church to enlarge her tents, and lengthen out her cords to receive those multitudes of children that should call her mother, for she should *break forth on the right hand and on the left, and her seed should inherit the Gentiles, Isa.* 54. 2, 3. The idolaters and persecutors should list their names in the muster-roll of the church.

Presently after the descent of the Holy Ghost from heaven upon the apostles, you find the hearts of three thousand melted by a plain declaration of this doctrine, who were a little before so far from having a favourable thought of it, that some of them at least, if not all, had expressed their rage against it, in voting for the condemning and crucifying the author of it, *Acts* 2. 41, 42. But in a moment they were so altered that they breathed forth affections instead of fury; neither the respect they had to their rulers, nor the honour they bore to their priests, nor the derisions of the people, nor the threatening of punishment, could stop them from owning it in the face of multitudes of discouragements. How wonderful is it that they should so soon, and by such small means, pay a reverence to the servants who had none for the master? That they should hear them with patience, without the same clamour against them as against Christ, *Crucify them, crucify them?* But, that their hearts should so suddenly be inflamed with devotion to him

dead, whom they so much abhorred when living. It had gained footing not in a corner of the world, but in the most famous cities; in Jerusalem, where Christ had been crucified; in Antioch, where the name of Christians first began; in Corinth, a place of ingenious arts; and Ephesus, the seat of a noted idol. In less than twenty years there was never a province of the Roman empire, and scarce any part of the known world, but was stored with the professors of it. Rome, that was the metropolis of the idolatrous world, had multitudes of them sprinkled in every corner, whose *faith was spoken of throughout the world, Rom.* 1. 8. The court of Nero, that monster of mankind, and the cruelest and most sordid tyrant that ever breathed, was not empty of sincere votaries to it; there were *saints in Cesar's house,* while Paul was under Nero's chain, *Phil.* 4. And it maintained its standing, and flourished in spite of all the force of hell 250 years before any sovereign prince espoused it.

The potentates of the earth had conquered the lands of men, and subdued their bodies; these vanquished hearts and wills, and brought the most beloved thoughts under the yoke of Christ. So much did this doctrine overmaster the consciences of its followers, that they rejoiced more at their yoke than others at their liberty; and counted it more a glory to die for the honour of it, than to live in the profession of it. Thus did our Saviour reign and gather subjects in the midst of his enemies; in which respect, in the first discovery of the gospel, he is described as a mighty conqueror, *Rev.* 6. 2, and still conquering in the greatness of his strength.

How great a testimony of his power is it, that from so small a cloud should rise so glorious a sun, that should chase before it the darkness and power of hell; triumph over the idolatry, superstition and profaneness of the world? This plain doctrine vanquished the obstinacy of the Jews, baffled the understanding of the Greeks, humbled the pride of the grandees, drove Satan not only out of the bodies, but also out of the hearts of men; tore up the foundation of his empire, and planted the cross where the devil had for many ages before established his stan-

dard. How much more than a human force is illustrious in this whole conduct? Nothing in any age of the world can parallel it; it being so much against the methods of nature, the disposition of the world, and, considering the resistance made against it, seems to surmount even the work of creation. Never were there in any profession such multitudes, not of bedlams, but men of sobriety, acuteness, and wisdom, that exposed themselves to the fury of the flames, and challenged death in the most terrifying shapes for the honour of this doctrine. To conclude, this should be often meditated upon to form our understandings to a full assent to the gospel, and the truth of it; the want of which consideration of power, and the customs of an education in the outward profession of it, is the ground of all the profaneness under it, and apostacy from it; the disesteem of the truth it declares, and the neglect of the duties it enjoins. The more we have a prospect and sense of the impressions of divine power in it, the more we shall have a reverence of the divine precepts.

The THIRD thing is, the power of God appears in the *application* of redemption, as well as in the person redeeming, and the publication and propagation of the doctrine of redemption.

1. In the *planting* grace. There is no expression which the Spirit of God hath thought fit in scripture to resemble this work to, but argues the exerting of a divine power for the effecting of it. When it is expressed by light, it is as much as the divine power of God in creating the sun; when by regeneration, it is as much as the power of God in forming an infant, and fashioning all the parts of a man; when it is called a resurrection, it is as much as the rearing of the body again out of putrified matter; when it is called creation, it is as much as erecting a comely world out of mere nothing, or an infirm and uncomely mass. As we could not contrive the death of Christ for our redemption, so we cannot form our souls to the acceptation of it; the infinite efficacy of grace is as necessary for the one, as the infinite wisdom of God was for laying the platform of the other.

It is by his power we have whatsoever pertains to godliness as well as life, 2 *Pet.* 1. 3. He puts his fingers upon the handle of the lock, and turns the heart to what point he pleases; the action whereby he performs this, is expressed by a word of force, *Colos.* 1. 19. ἐρρύσατο. *He hath snatched us from the power of darkness;* the action whereby it is performed manifests it. In reference to this power it is called creation, which is a production from nothing; and conversion is a production from something more incapable of that state, than mere nothing is of being. There is a greater distance between the terms of sin and righteousness, corruption and grace, than between the terms of nothing and being; the greater the distance is, the more power is required to the producing any thing. As in miracles, the miracle is the greater where the change is the greater; and the change is the greater where the distance is the greater: as it was a more signal mark of power to change a dead man to life, than to change a sick man to health; so that the change here being from a term of a greater distance, is more powerful than the creation of heaven and earth: therefore, whereas creation is said to be wrought by his hands, and the heavens by his fingers, or his word; conversion is said to be wrought by his arm, *Isa.* 53. 1. In creation we had an earthly, by conversion a heavenly state: in creation, nothing is changed into something, in conversion, hell is transformed into heaven, which is more than the turning nothing into a glorious angel. In that thanksgiving of our Saviour for the revelation of the knowledge of himself to babes, *Mat.* 11. 5, the simple of the world, he gives the title to his Father of *Lord of heaven and earth,* intimating it to be an act of his creative and preserving power; that power whereby he formed heaven and earth, hath preserved the standing, and governed the motions of all creatures from the beginning of the world.

It is resembled to the most magnificent act of divine power that God ever put forth, viz. that in the resurrection of our Saviour, wherein there was more than an ordinary impression of might, *Eph.* 1. 19. It is not so small a power as that whereby we speak with tongues, or

whereby Christ opened the mouths of the dumb and the ears of the deaf, or unloosed the cords of death from a person. It is not that power whereby our Saviour wrought those stupendous miracles when he was in the world; but that power which wrought a miracle that amazed the most knowing angels, as well as ignorant man: the taking off the weight of the sin of the world from our Saviour, and advancing him in his human nature to rule over the angelic host, making him head of *principalities and powers*; as much as to say, as great as all that power which is displayed in our redemption, from the first foundation to the last line in the superstructure. It is therefore often set forth with an emphasis, as *excellency of power*, 2 *Cor.* 4. 7; and *glorious power*, 2 *Pet.* 1. 3. *To glory and virtue*, we translate it; but it is διὰ δόξης, *through glory and virtue*, that is, by a glorious virtue or strength.

2. The *instrument* whereby it is wrought, is dignified with the title of power. The gospel which God useth in this great affair, is called, *the power of God to salvation*, *Rom.* 1. 16. And the *rod of his strength*, *Psal.* 110. 2. And the day of the gospel's appearance in the heart, is emphatically called, *the day of power*, ver. 3, wherein he brings down strong holds and towering imaginations.* And therefore the angel Gabriel, which name signifies the *power of God*, was always sent upon those messages which concerned the gospel, as to Daniel, Zechariah, Mary. The gospel is the power of God, in a way of instrumentality, but the omnipotence of God is the principal in a way of efficiency. The gospel is the sceptre of Christ; but the power of Christ is the mover of that sceptre. The gospel is not as a bare word spoken, and proposing the thing; but as backed with a higher efficacy of grace: as the sword doth instrumentally cut, but the arm that wields it gives the blow, and makes it successful in the stroke. But this gospel is the power of God, because he edgeth this by his own power, to surmount all resistance, and vanquish the greatest malice of that man he designs to work upon.

* Grotius in Luke 1. 19.

The power of God is conspicuous,

1. In turning the heart of man *against the strength of the inclinations of nature.* In the forming of man of the dust of the ground, as the matter contributed nothing to the action whereby God formed it, so it had no principle of resistance contrary to the design of God: but in converting the heart, there is not only wanting a principle of assistance from him in this work, but the whole strength of corrupt nature is alarmed to combat against the power of his grace. When the gospel is presented, the understanding is not only ignorant of it, but the will perverse against it; the one does not relish, and the other does not esteem, the excellency of the object. The carnal wisdom in the mind contrives against it, and the rebellious will puts the orders in execution against the counsel of God, which requires the invincible power of God to enlighten the dark mind, to know what it slights; and the fierce will, to embrace what it loathes. The stream of nature cannot be turned, but by a power above nature: it is not all the created power in heaven and earth can change a swine into a man, or a venomous toad into a holy illustrious angel. Yet this work is not so great in some respect, as the stilling the fierceness of nature, the silencing the swelling waves in the heart, and the casting out those brutish affections which are born and grow up with us. There would be no, or far less, resistance in a mere animal to be changed into a creature of a higher rank, than there is in a natural man to be turned into a serious christian.

There is in every natural man a stoutness of heart, a stiff-neck, unwillingness to good, forwardness to evil. But infinite power quells this stoutness, demolishes these strong holds, turns this wild ass in her course, and routs those armies of turbulent nature against the grace of God. To stop the floods of the sea is not such an act of power, as to turn the tide of the heart. This power hath been employed upon every convert in the world: what would you say then, if you knew all the channels in which it hath run since the days of Adam? If the alteration of one rocky heart into a pool of water be a wonder of power,

what then is the calming and sweetening by his word those one hundred and forty four thousand of the tribes of Israel, and that numberles multitude of all nations and people that shall stand before the throne, which were all naturally so many raging seas? Not one converted soul from Adam, to the last that shall be in the end of the world, but is a trophy of the divine conquest. None were pure volunteers, nor enlisted themselves in his service, until he put forth his strong arm to draw them to him. No man's understanding but was chained with darkness, and fond of it; no man but had corruption in his will, which was dearer to him than any thing else which could be proposed for his true happiness. These things are most evident in scripture and experience.

2. As it is wrought against the inclinations of nature; so against *a multitude of corrupt habits* rooted in the souls of men. A distemper in its first invasion may more easily be cured, than when it becomes chronical and inveterate. The strength of a disease, or the complication of many, magnifies the power of the physician, and efficacy of the medicine that tames and expels it. What power is that which hath made men stoop, when natural habits have been grown giants by custom; when the putrefaction of nature hath engendered a multitude of worms; when the ulcers are many and deplorable; when many cords, wherewith God would have bound the sinner, have been broken, and, like Sampson, the wicked heart hath gloried in its strength, and grown more proud, that it hath stood like a strong fort against those batteries, under which others have fallen flat?

Every proud thought, every evil habit captivated, serves for matter of triumph to the power of God, 2 *Cor.* 10. 5. What resistance will a multitude of them make, when one of them is enough to hold the faculty under its dominion, and intercept its operations? So many customary habits, so many old natures, so many different strengths added to nature, every one of them standing as a barricado against the way of grace; all the errors the understanding is possessed with, think the gospel folly; all the vices the will is filled with, count it the fetter and band.

Nothing so contrary to man as to be thought a fool; nothing so contrary to man, as to enter into slavery. It is no easy matter to plant the cross of Christ upon a heart guided by many principles against the truth of it, and biassed by a world of wickedness against the holiness of it.

Nature renders a man too feeble and indisposed, and custom renders a man more weak and unwilling to change his hue, *Jer.* 13. 23. To dispossess man then of his self-esteem and self-excellency; to make room for God in the heart, where there was none but for sin, as dear to him as himself; to hurl down the pride of nature; to make stout imaginations stoop to the cross; to make desires of self-advancement sink under a zeal for the glorifying of God, and an over-ruling design for his honour, is not to be ascribed to any, but an out-stretched arm wielding the *sword of the spirit.* To have a heart full of the fear of God, that was just before filled with a contempt of him; to have a sense of his power, an eye to his glory, admiring thoughts of his wisdom, a faith in his truth, that had lower thoughts of him and all his perfection, than he had of a creature: to have a hatred of his habitual lusts, that had brought him in much sensitive pleasure; to loathe them as much as he loved them; to cherish the duties he hated; to live by faith in, and obedience to the Redeemer, who was before so heartily under the conduct of Satan and self; to chase the acts of sin from his members, and the pleasing thoughts of sin from his mind; to make a stout wretch willingly fall down, crawl upon the ground, and adore that Saviour whom before he out-dared, is a triumphant act of infinite power that can *subdue all things to itself*, and break those multitude of locks and bolts that were upon us.

3. Against a multitude of *temptations and interests.* The temptations rich men have in this world are so numerous and strong, that the entrance of one of them into the kingdom of heaven, that is, the entertainment of the gospel, is made by our Saviour an *impossible* thing *with men*, and procurable only by the power of God, *Luke* 18. 24, 25, 26. The divine strength only can separate the world from the heart, and the heart from the world. There

must be an incomprehensible power to chase away the devil, that had so long so strong a footing in the affections, to render the soil he had sown with so many tares and weeds, capable of good grain; to make spirits, that had found the sweetness of worldly prosperity, wrapped up all their happiness in it, and not only bent down, but, as it were, buried in earth and mud, to be loosened from those beloved cords, to disrelish the earth for a crucified Christ; I say, this must be the effect of an Almighty power.

4. The *manner* of conversion shews no less the power of God. There is not only a resistible force used in it, but an agreeable sweetness. The power is so efficacious, that nothing can vanquish it; and so sweet, that none did ever complain of it. The almighty virtue displays itself invincibly, yet without constraint; compelling the will, without offering violence to it, and making it cease to be will: not forcing it, but changing it; not dragging it, but drawing it; making will where before it nilled; removing the corrupt nature of the will, without invading the created nature and rights of the faculty; not working in us against the physical nature of the will, but working *to will*, *Phil.* 2. 13. This work is therefore called creation, a resurrection, to shew its irresistible power; it is called illumination, persuasion, drawing, to shew the suitableness of its efficacy to the nature of the human faculties: it is a *drawing with cords*, which testifies an invincible strength; but with cords of love, which testifies a delightful conquest. It is hard to determine whether it be more powerful than sweet, or more sweet than powerful. It is no mean part of the power of God to unite together victory and pleasure; to give a blow as delightful as strong, as pleasing to the sufferer as it is sharp to the sinner.

II. The power of God in the application of redemption is evident in the *pardoning a sinner*.

1. In the pardon *itself*. The power of God is made the ground of his patience; or the reason why he is patient, is, because he would *shew his power*, *Rom.* 9. 22. It is a part of magnanimity to pass by injuries. As

weaker stomachs cannot concoct the tougher food, so weak minds cannot digest the harder injuries; he that passes over a wrong, is superior to his adversary that does it. When God speaks of his own name as merciful, he speaks first of himself as powerful, *The Lord, the Lord God, Exod.* 34. 6, that is the Lord, the *strong Lord*, Jehovah, the strong Jehovah. *Let the power of my Lord be great*, saith Moses, when he prays for the forgiveness of the people.* The word *Jigdal* is written with a great *Jod*, or a *Jod* above the other letters. The power of God in pardoning is advanced beyond an ordinary strain, beyond the creative strength. In the creation, he had power over the creatures; in *this*, he had power over himself: in creation, not himself, but the creatures were the object of his power; in that no attribute of his nature could article against his design. In the pardon of a sinner, after many overtures made to him, and refused by him, God exercises a power over himself; for the sinner hath dishonoured God, provoked his justice, abused his goodness, done injury to all those attributes which are necessary to his relief: it was not so in creation, nothing was incapable of disobliging God from bringing it into being. The dust, which was the matter of Adam's body, needed only the extrinsic power of God to form it into a man, and inspire it with a living soul: it had not rendered itself obnoxious to divine justice, nor was capable to excite any disputes between his perfections. But after the entrance of sin, and the merit of death, thereby there was a resistance in justice to the free remission of man. God was to exercise a power over himself, to answer his justice, and pardon the sinner; as well as a power over the creature, to reduce the run-away and rebel. Unless we have recourse to the infinity of God's power, the infiniteness of our guilt will weigh us down. We must consider not only that we have a mighty guilt to press us, but a mighty God to relieve us. In the same act of his being our righteousnes, he is our strength. *In the Lord have I righteousness and strength, Isa.* 45. 24.

2. In the *sense* of pardon. When the soul hath been

* Num. 14. 17. ὑψωθήτω be exalted. Sept. כיח Strength, &c.

wounded with the sense of sin, and its iniquities have stared it in the face; the raising the soul from a despairing condition, and lifting it above those waters which terrified it; to cast the light of comfort, as well as the light of grace, into a heart covered with more than an Egyptian darkness, is an act of his infinite and creaing power; *I create the fruit of the lips, peace, Isa.* 57. 19. Men may wear out their lips with numbering up the promises of grace and arguments of peace; but all will signify no more without a creative power, than if all men and angels should call to that white upon the wall to shine as splendidly as the sun. God only can *create Jerusalem*, and every child of Jerusalem a *rejoicing*. A man is no more able to apply to himself any word of comfort under the sense of sin, than he is able to convert himself, and turn the proposals of the word into the gracious affections in his heart. To *restore the joy of salvation*, is in David's judgment an act of sovereign power, equal to that of *creating a clean heart, Psal.* 51. 10. 12. Alas, it is a state like to that of death; as infinite power can only raise from natural death, so from spiritual death, also from a comfortless death. *In his favour there is life;* in the want of his favour is death. The power of God hath so placed light in the sun, that all creatures in the world, all the torches upon earth kindled together cannot make it day if that doth not rise; so all the angels in heaven and men upon earth, are not competent surgeons for a wounded spirit. The cure of our spiritual diseases, and the pouring in balm, is an act of sovereign creative power. It is more visible in silencing a tempestuous conscience, than the power of our Saviour was in the stilling the stormy winds and the roaring waves. As none but infinite power can remove the guilt of sin, so none but infinite power can remove the despairing sense of it.

III. This power is evident in the *preserving* grace. As the providence of God is a manifestation of his power in a continued creation; so the preservation of grace is a manifestation of his power in a regeneration. To keep a nation under the yoke, is an act of the same power that subdued it. It is this that strengthens men in suffering against the fury of

hell, *Colos.* 1. 13; it is this that keeps them from falling against the force of hell, *John* 10. 29. His strength abates and moderates the violence of temptations; his staff sustains his people under them; his might defeats the power of Satan, and bruises him under a believer's feet. The counterworkings of indwelling corruption; the reluctances of the flesh against the breathings of the Spirit; the fallacy of the senses and the rovings of the mind, have ability quickly to stifle and extinguish grace, if it were not maintained by that powerful blast that first inbreathed it. No less power is seen in perfecting it, than was in planting it; no less in fulfilling the work of faith, than in ingrafting the word of faith, 2 *Pet.* 1. 3, and 2 *Thes.* 1. 11.

The apostle well understood the necessity and efficacy of it in the preservation of faith, as well as in the first infusion, when he expresses himself in those terms of a greatness or hyperbole of power, his mighty *power*, or the *power of his might*, *Eph.* 1. 19. The salvation he bestows, and the strength whereby he effects it, are joined together in the prophet's song, *The Lord is my strength and my salvation*, *Isa.* 12. 2; and indeed, God more magnifies his power in continuing a believer in the world, a weak and half-rigged vessel, in the midst of so many sands whereon it might split; so many rocks whereon it might dash; so many corruptions within, and so many temptations without; than if he immediately transported him to heaven, and clothed him with a perfectly sanctified nature.

To conclude, what is there then in the world which is destitute of notices of divine power? Every creature affords us the lesson; all acts of divine government are the marks of it. Look into the word, and the manner of its propagation instructs us in it; your changed natures, your pardoned guilt, your shining comfort, your quelled corruptions, the standing of your staggering graces, are sufficient to preserve a sense, and prevent forgetfulness of this great attribute, so necessary for your support, and conducing so much to your comfort.

PART VII.

THE SUBJECT IMPROVED.

Divine nature of Jesus—Proof of it—Deity of the Holy Ghost inferred—Blessedness of God—Ground of his immutability—Providence—Worship—The resurrection—Contempt and abuse of divine power—The security and happiness of believers—Meditation on it—Trust in it—Teaches humility and submission---The best antidote against fear.

I. THE *instruction* to be derived from the consideration of Jehovah's power.

1. If incomprehensible and infinite power belongs to the nature of God, then Jesus Christ hath *a divine nature,* because the acts of power proper to God are ascribed to him. This perfection of omnipotence unquestionably pertains to the Deity, and is an incommunicable property, and the same with the essence of God. He therefore to whom this attribute is ascribed, is essentially God.

This is challenged by Christ in conjunction with eternity; *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty, Rev.* 1. 8. This our Lord speaks of himself. He who was equal with God, proclaims himself by the essential title of the Godhead, part of which he repeats again, ver. 11. And this is the person which *walks in the midst of the seven golden*

candlesticks; the person that *was dead and now lives*, ver. 17, 18, which cannot possibly be meant of the Father, the first person, who can never come under that denomination of having been dead. Being therefore adorned with the same title, he hath the same Deity; and though his omnipotence be only positively asserted, ver. 8, yet his eternity being asserted, ver. 11, 17, it infers his immense power; for he that is eternal without limits of time, must needs be conceived powerful, without any dash of infirmity.

Again, when he is said to be *a child born*, and *a Son given*, in the same breath he is called the *mighty God*, *Isa. 9. 6.* It is introduced as a ground of comfort to the church, to preserve their hopes in the accomplishment of the promises made to them before. They should not imagine him to have only the infirmity of a man, though he was veiled in the appearance of a man. No, they should look through the disguise of his flesh, to the might of his Godhead. The attribute of mighty is added to the title God, because the consideration of power is most capable to sustain the drooping church in such a condition, and to support her hopes. It is upon this account he saith of himself, that *whatsoever things the Father doth, those also doth the Son likewise, John 5. 19.* In the creation of heaven, earth, sea, and the preservation of all things, the Son works with the same will, wisdom, virtue, power, as the Father works; not as two may concur in an action in a different manner, as an agent and an instrument, a carpenter and his tools; but in the same manner of operation, ὁμοίως, which we translate *likeness*, which doth not express so well the emphasis of the word. There is no diversity of action between us; what the Father doth, that I do by the same power, with the same ease in every respect; there is the same creative, productive, conservative power in both of us; and that not in one work that is done *ad extra*, but in all, in whatsoever the Father doth. In the same manner; not by a delegated, but natural and essential power, by one undivided operation and manner of working.

The creation, which is a work of omnipotence, is more than once *ascribed to him.* This he owns himself; the creation of the earth, and of man upon it; the stretching out the heavens by his hands, and the forming of *all the host of them by his command, Isa.* 45. 12. He is not only the Creator of Israel, the church, ver. 12, but of the whole world, and every creature on the face of the earth, and in the glories of the heavens; which is repeated also ver. 18, where in this act of creation he is called God himself, and speaks of himself in the term Jehovah; and swears by himself, ver. 23. What doth he swear? *That unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear.* Is this Christ? Yes, if the apostle may be believed, who applies it to him, *Rom.* 14. 11, to prove the appearance of all men before the judgment seat of Christ, whom the prophet calls, ver. 15, a *God that hides himself;* and so he was a hidden God when obscured in our fleshly infirmities. He was in conjunction with the Father when the sea received his decree, and the foundations of the earth were appointed; not as a spectator, but as an artificer, for so the word signifies, *as one brought up with him, Prov.* 8. 30; it signifies also, a *cunning* workman, *Cant.* 7. 1. He was the east, or the sun from whence sprang all the light of life and being to the creature; so the word קדם ver. 22, which is translated, *before his works of old,* is rendered by some, and signifies the east as well as before; but if it notes only his existence before, it is enough to prove his deity.

The scripture doth not only allow him an existence before the world, but exalts him as the cause of the world; a thing may precede another that is not the cause of that which follows; a precedency in age doth not entitle one brother or thing the cause of another; but our Saviour is not only ancienter than the world, but is the Creator of the world, *who laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of his hands, Heb.* 1. 10, 11. So great an eulogy cannot be given to one destitute of omnipotence. Since the distance between being and not being is so vast a gulf that cannot

be surmounted and stepped over, but by an infinite power; he is *the first and the last*, that called the *generations from the beginning*, *Isa.* 41. 4, and had an almighty voice to call them out of nothing. Hence *The everlasting Father*, *Isa.* 9. 6, as being the efficient of creation; as God is called *the Father of the rain*, or as father is taken for the inventor of an art; as Jubal, the first framer and inventor of music, is called, *the father of such as handle the harp*, *Gen.* 4. 21. And that person is said to *make the sea, and form the dry land by his hands*, *Psal.* 95. 5, 6, against whom we are exhorted not to *harden our hearts*, ver. 8, which is applied to Christ by his apostle, *Heb.* 3. 8, and ver. 15, he is called, a *great king*, and a *great God our Maker*. The places wherein the creation is attributed to Christ, the antagonists of his deity would evade by understanding them of the new or evangelical, not of the first old and material creation; but what appearance is there for such a sense? Consider,

Heb. 1. 10, 11. It is spoken of that earth and heavens which were in the *beginning* of time; it is that earth that shall *perish*, that heaven that shall be *folded up*, that creation that shall grow old towards a decay; that is, only the visible and material creation; the spiritual shall endure for ever; it grows not old to decay, but grows up to a perfection; it sprouts up to its happiness, not to its detriment. The same person creates that shall destroy, and the same world is created by him that shall be destroyed by him, as well as it subsisted by virtue of his omnipotence.

Can that also, *by whom also he made the worlds*, *Heb.* 1. 2, speaking of Christ, bear the same plea? It was the same person by whom *God spake to us in these last times*, the same person which he hath constituted *heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds:* and the particle *also*, intimates it to be a distinct act from his speaking or prophetical office, whereby he restored and new created the world, as well as the rightful foundation God had to make him heir of all things. It refers likewise, not to the time of Christ's speaking upon earth; but to

something past, and something different from the publication of the gospel: it is not, *doth* make, which had been more likely if the apostle had meant only the new creation; but *hath* made*, referring to time long since past, something done before his appearance upon earth as a prophet. By whom also he made the *worlds*, or *ages*, all things subjected to, or measured by time; which must be meant according to the Jewish phrase of this material visible world: so they entitle God in their liturgy, the *Lord of ages*, that is, the Lord of the world, and all ages and revolutions of the world, from the creation to the last period of time. If any thing were in being before this frame of heaven and earth, and within the compass of time, it received being and duration from the Son of God. The apostle would give an argument to prove the equity of making him heir of all things as *Mediator*, because he was the framer of all things as *God*. He may well be the heir or Lord of angels as well as men, who created angels as well as men: all things were justly under his power as Mediator, since they derived their existence from him as *Creator*.

And what evasion can there be for that? *By him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him and for him*, Coloss. 1. 16. He is said to be the Creator of material and visible things, as well as spiritual and invisible; of things in *heaven*, which needed no restoration, as well as things on *earth*, which were polluted by sin, and stood in need of a new creation. How could the angels belong to the new creation, who had never put off the honour and purity of the first? Since they never divested themselves of their original integrity, they could not be re-invested with that which they never lost. Besides, suppose the holy angels be one way or other reduced as parts of the new creation, as being under the mediatory government of our Saviour, as their head, and in regard of their confirmation by him in that happy state. In what manner shall

* Εποίησεν.

the devils be ranked among new creatures? They are called *principalities* and *powers* as well as the angels, and may come under the title of things *invisible*: that they are called principalities and powers is plain, *for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world; against spiritual wickedness in high places, Eph.* 6. 12. Good angels are not there meant, for what war have believers with them, or they with believers? They are their guardians, since Christ hath taken away the enmity between our Lord and theirs, in whose quarrel they were engaged against us: and since the apostle, speaking of *all things created by him*, expresseth it so, that it cannot be conceived he should except any thing; how come the finally impenitent and unbelievers, which are *things in earth*, and visible, to be listed here in the roll of new creatures? None of these can be called *new* creatures, because they are subjected to the government of Christ: no more than the earth and sea, and the animals in it, are made new creatures, because they are all under the dominion of Christ and his providential government. Again, the apostle manifestly makes the creation he here speaks of, to be the material, and not the new creation; for that he speaks of afterwards as a distinct act of our Lord Jesus under the title of *reconciliation, Coloss.* 1. 20, 21, which was the restoration of the world, and the satisfying for that curse that lay upon it. His intent is here to shew, that not an angel in heaven, nor a creature upon earth, but was placed in their several degrees of excellency by the power of the Son of God, who after that act of creation and the entrance of sin, was the reconciler of the world through *the blood of his cross.*

There is another place as clear; *All things were made by him, and without him was nothing made that was made, John* 1. 3. The creation is here ascribed to him; affirmatively, *all things* were made by him; negatively, there was *nothing* made without him: and the words are emphatical, οὐδὲ ἕν, *not one thing;* excepting nothing; including invisible things, as well as things conspicuous to sense only, mentioned in the story of the creation, *Gen.* 1.

not only the entire mass, but the distinct parcels, the smallest worm and the highest angel, owe their being to him. And if not *one* thing, then the matter was not created to his hands; and his work consisted not only in the forming things from that matter: if that one thing of matter were excepted, a chief thing were excepted; if not one thing were excepted, then he created something of nothing, because spirits, as angels and souls, are not made of any pre-existing or fore-created matter. How could the evangelist phrase it more extensively and comprehensively? This is a character of omnipotence; to create the world, and every thing in it, of nothing, requires an infinite virtue and power. If all things were created by him, they were not created by him as *man*, because himself, as man, was not in being before the creation: if all things were made by him, then himself was not made, himself was not created; and to be existent without being made, without being created, is to be unboundedly omnipotent. And if we understand it of the new creation, as they do that will not allow him an existence in his Deity before his humanity, it cannot be true of that; for how could he regenerate Abraham, make Simeon and Anna new creatures, who *waited for the salvation of Israel*, and form John Baptist, and fill him with the *Holy Ghost from the womb* (who belonged to the new creation, and was to *prepare the way*) if Christ had not a being before him? The evangelist alludes to, and explains the history of the creation in the beginning, and acquaints us what was meant by *God said*, so often, viz. the *eternal word*, and describes him in his creative power, manifested in the framing the world, before he describes him in his incarnation, when he came to lay the foundation of the restoration of the world, *the word was made flesh*, *John* 1. 14, this word who was *with God*, *who was God*, *was made all things*, and gave being to the most glorious angels and the meanest creature without exception; this *word*, in time, *was made flesh*.

The *creation* of things mentioned in these scriptures cannot be attributed to him as an instrument. As if when it is said, God created all things *by him*, and *by*

him made the worlds, we were to understand the father to be the agent, and the son to be a tool in his father's hand, as an axe in the hand of a carpenter, or a file in the hand of a smith, or a servant acting by command, as the organ of his master. The preposition *per*, or διὰ, does not always signify an instrumental cause: when it is said, that the apostle gave the Thessalonians a command *by Jesus Christ*, 1 *Thess.* 4. 2, was Christ the instrument, and not the Lord of that command? The immediate operation of Christ dwelling in the apostles, was that whereby they gave commands to their disciples. When we are said to be called *by God*, 1 *Cor.* 1. 9. Is he the instrumental or principal cause of our effectual vocation? And can the will of God be the instrument of putting Paul into the apostleship, or the sovereign cause of investing him with that dignity, when he calls himself an *apostle by the will of God? Eph.* 1. 3. And when all things are said to be *through* God, as well as *of* him, must he be counted the instrumental cause of his own creation, counsels, and judgments? *Rom.* 11. 36. When we *mortify the deeds of the body through the Spirit*, *Rom.* 8. 13, or keep the *treasure of the word by the Holy Ghost*, 2 *Tim.* 1. 14. Is the Holy Ghost of no more dignity in such acts than an instrument? Nor does the gaining of a thing *by* a person make him a mere instrument or inferior; as when a man gains his right in a way of justice against his adversary by the magistrate, is the judge inferior to the suppliant? If the word were an instrument in creation, it must be a created or uncreated instrument: if created, it could not be true that *all things were made by him*, since himself, the principal, could not be made by himself; if uncreated, he was God, and so acted by a divine omnipotence which surmounts an instrumental cause. But indeed, an instrument is impossible in creation, since it is wrought only by an act of the divine will. Do we need any organ to an act of volition? The efficacious will of the Creator is the cause of the origin of the body of the world, with its particular members and exact harmony; it was formed by a *word* and established by a *command*, *Psa.* 33. 9; the beauty

of the creation stood up at the precept of his will. Nor was the Son a partial cause; as when many are said to build a house, one works one part, and another frames another part: God created all things by the immediate operation of the Son, in the unity of essence, goodness, power, wisdom; not an extrinsic, but a connatural instrument. As the sun illustrates things by his light, and quickens all things by his heat; so God created the worlds by Christ, as he was the *brightness* or splendour *of his glory*, the *exact image of his person*, *Heb.* 1. 3, 4; which follows the declaration of his making the worlds *by* him, to shew, that he acted not as an instrument, but one in essential conjunction with him; as light and brightness with the sun. But suppose he did make the world as a kind of instrument, he was then before the world, not bounded by time; and eternity cannot well be conceived belonging to a being without omnipotence: he is the end as well as the author of the creatures, *Colos.* 1. 16; not only the principle which gave them being, but the sea into whose glory they run and dissolve themselves, which consists not with the meanness of an instrument.

As creation, so *preservation* is ascribed to him, *by him all things consist*, *Colos.* 1. 17. As he preceded all things in his eternity, so he establishes all things by his omnipotence, and fixes them in their several centres, that they sink not into that nothing from whence he fetched them. By him they flourish in their several beings, and observe the laws and orders he first appointed: that power of his which extracted them from insensible nothing, upholds them in their several beings with the same facility as he spake being into them, even *by the word of his power*, *Heb.* 1. 3, and by one creative continued voice called all generations from the beginning to the period of the world, and causes them to flourish in their several seasons. It is *by him kings reign, and princes decree justice*, *Isa.* 41. 4, and all things are confined within the limits of his government. All which are acts of an infinite power.

Resurrection is also ascribed to him. The body crumbled to dust, and that dust blown to several quarters

of the world, cannot be gathered in its distinct parts, and new formed for the entertainment of the soul, without the strength of an infinite arm. This he will do and more; change the vileness of an earthly body into the glory of a heavenly body, which is an argument of a power invincible, to which all things cannot but stoop; for it is by such an operation, which testifies an ability *to subdue all things to himself*; especially when he works it with the same ease as he did the creation, by the power of his voice. *All that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth, John* 5. 28: speaking them into a restored life from insensible dust, as he did into being from an empty nothing. The greatest acts of power are owned to belong to creation, preservation, resurrection; omnipotence therefore is his right; and therefore a Deity cannot be denied to him that inherits a perfection essential to none but God, and impossible to be intrusted in, or managed by, the hands of any creatures.

And this is no trivial comfort to those that believe in him: he is, in regard of his power, *the horn of salvation;* so Zacharias sings of him, *Luke* 1. 69. Nor could there be any more mighty found out upon whom God could have *laid our help, Psal.* 89. 19. There can be no reason therefore to doubt his ability to save to the utmost, who hath the power of creation, preservation, and resurrection in his hands. His promises must be accomplished, since nothing can resist him; he hath power to fulfil his word and to bring all things to a final issue, because he is almighty; by his outstretched arm in the deliverance of his Israel from Egypt, (for it was his arm, 1 *Cor.* 10.) he shewed that he was able to deliver us from spiritual Egypt. The charge of Mediator to expiate sin, vanquish hell, form a church, conduct and perfect it, are not to be effected by a person of less ability than infinite. Let this almightiness of his be the bottom, whereon to cast and fix the anchor of our hopes.

2. Hence may be inferred the Deity of *the Holy Ghost.* Works of omnipotence are ascribed to the Spirit of God: by the motion of the wings of this Spirit, as a bird over her eggs, was that rude and unshapen mass hatched into

a comely world.* The stars, or perhaps the angels are meant by the garnishing of the heavens in the verse before the text, were brought forth in their comeliness and dignity, as the ornament of the upper world, by this Spirit; *by his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens.* To this Spirit Job ascribes the formation both of the body and soul under the title of *Almighty, Job* 33. 4. *The Spirit of God hath made me. and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.* Resurrection, another work of omnipotence, is attributed to him, *Rom.* 8. 11. The conception of our Saviour; and the miracles he wrought, were by the power of the *Spirit* in him. Power is a title belonging to him, and sometimes both are put together, 1 *Thess.* 1. 5, and other places. And that great power of changing the heart, and sanctifying a polluted nature, a work greater than creation, is frequently acknowledged in the scripture to be the peculiar act of the Holy Ghost. The Father, Son, and Spirit, are one principle in creation, resurrection, and all the works of omnipotence.

3. Inference from the doctrine. The *blessedness* of God is hence evidenced. If God be almighty, he can want nothing; all want speaks weakness. If he doth what he will, he cannot be miserable; all misery consists in those things which happen contrary to our will. There is nothing can hinder his happiness, because nothing can resist his power. Since he is omnipotent, nothing can hurt him, nothing can strip him of what he hath, of what he is†. If he can do whatsoever he will, he cannot want any thing that he wills: he is as happy, as great, as glorious, as he will; for he hath a perfect liberty of will to will, and a perfect power to attain what he will. It would be a defect in blessedness, to will what he were not able to do: sorrow is the result of a want of power, with a presence of will. ‡If he could will any thing which he could not effect, he would be miserable, and no longer God: he can do whatsoever he pleases, and therefore can want nothing that pleases him. He cannot be happy,

* Gen. 1. 2. So the word *moved* properly signifies.

† Sabunde, Tit. 39. ‡ Pont, part 6. med. 16. p. 531.

the original of whose happiness is not in himself: nothing can be infinitely happy that is limited and bounded.

4. Hence is a ground for the *immutability* of God. As he is incapable of changing his resolves, because of his infinite wisdom; so he is incapable of being forced to any change, because of his infinite power. Being almighty, he can be no more changed from power to weakness; than being all-wise, he can be changed from wisdom to folly; or being omniscient, from knowledge to ignorance. He cannot be altered in his purposes, because of his wisdom, nor in the manner and method of his actions, because of his infinite strength. Men indeed, when their designs are laid deepest, and their purposes stand firmest, yet are forced to stand still, or change the manner of the execution of their resolves, by reason of some outward accidents that obstruct them in their course; for having not wisdom to foresee future hinderances, they have not power to prevent them, or strength to remove them, when they unexpectedly interpose themselves between their desire and performance: but no created power hath strength enough to be a bar against God. By the same act of his will that he resolves a thing, he can puff away any impediments that seem to rise up against him. He that wants no means to effect his purposes, cannot be checked by any thing that rises up to stand in his way: heaven, earth, sea, the deepest places, are too weak to resist his will, *Psal.* 135. 6. The purity of the angels will not, and the malice of Satan cannot, frustrate his will; the one voluntarily obeys the beck of his hand, and the other are vanquished by the power of it. What can make him change his purposes, who, if he pleased, can dash the earth against the heavens, in the twinkling of an eye, untying the world from its centre, melt the stars and elements together into one mass, and blow the whole creation of men and devils into nothing. Because he is almighty, therefore he is immutable.

5. Hence is inferred the *providence* of God, and his government of the world. His power as well as his wisdom gives him a right to govern: nothing can equal him,

therefore nothing can share the command with him; since all things are his works, it is fittest they should be under his order: he that frames a work is fittest to guide and govern it. God hath the greatest right to govern, because he hath knowledge to direct his power, and power to execute the results of his wisdom: he knows what is convenient to order, and hath strength to effect what he orders. As his power would be oppressive without goodness and wisdom; so his goodness and wisdom would be fruitless without power. An artificer that hath lost his hands may direct, but cannot make an engine: a pilot that hath lost his arms, may advise the way of steerage, but cannot hold the helm; something is wanting in him to be a complete governor: but since both counsel and power are infinite in God, hence results an infinite right to govern, and an infinite fitness, because his will cannot be resisted, his power cannot be enfeebled or diminished; he can quicken and increase the strength of all means as he pleases. He can hold all things in the world together, and preserve them in those functions wherein he settled them, and conduct them to those ends for which he designed them.

Every artificer, the more excellent he is, and the more excellency of power appears in his work, is the more careful to maintain and cherish it. Those that deny providence, do not only rob him of the attributes of his goodness and wisdom, but strip him of a main exercise of his power, and engender in men a suspicion of weariness and feebleness in him; as though his strength had been so spent in making them, that none is left to guide them. If he did not, or were not able to preserve and provide for his creatures, his power in making them would be in a great part, an invisible power; if he did not preserve what he made, and govern what he preserves, it would be a kind of strange and rude power, to make, and suffer it to be dashed in pieces at the pleasure of others. If the power of God should relinquish the world, the life of things would be extinguished, the fabric would be confounded and fall into a deplorable chaos. That which is

composed of so many various pieces, could not maintain its union, if there were not a secret virtue binding them together, and maintaining those varieties of links.

Well then, since God is not only so good, that he cannot will any thing but what is good; so wise that he cannot err or mistake; but is also so able, that he cannot be defeated, he hath every way a full ability to govern the world; where those three are infinite, the right and fitness resulting from thence is unquestionable: and indeed, to deny God this active part of his power, is to render him weak, foolish, cruel, or all.

6. Here is a ground for the *worship* of God. Wisdom and power are the grounds of the respect we give to men; they being both infinite in God, are the foundation of a solemn honour to be returned to him by his creatures. If a man make a curious engine, we honour him for his skill; if another vanquish a vigorous enemy, we admire him for his strength: And shall not the efficacy of God's power in creation, government, and redemption, inflame us with a sense of the honour of his name and perfections? We admire those princes that have vast empires, and numerous armies, that have a power to conquer their enemies, and preserve their own people in peace: how much more ground have we to pay a mighty reverence to God, who without trouble and weariness made and manages this vast empire of the world by a word and beck? What sensible thoughts have we of the noise of thunder, the power of the sun, the storms of the sea? These things that have no understanding have struck men with such a reverence, that many have adored them as gods. What reverence and adoration doth this mighty power, joined with an infinite wisdom in God, demand at our hands?

All religion and worship stands especially upon two pillars, goodness and power in God; if either of these were defective, all religion would die away. We can expect no entertainment with him without goodness, nor any benefit from him without power. This God prefaceth to the command to worship him, the benefit his goodness had conferred upon them, and the powerful manner of conveying it to them, 2 *Kings* 17. 36. *The*

Lord brought you up from the land of Egypt with great power and out-stretched arm; him shall you fear, and him shall you worship, and to him shall you do sacrifice. Because this attribute is a main foundation of prayer, the Lord's prayer is concluded with a doxology of it, *for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory.* As he is rich, possessing all blessings; so he is powerful, to confer all blessings on us, and make them efficacious to us. * The Jews repeat many times in their prayers, some say an hundred times, מלך העולם *the king of the world;* it is both an awe and an encouragement. We could not without consideration of it pray in faith of success; nay we could not pray at all, if his power were defective to help us, and his mercy too weak to relieve us. Who would solicit a lifeless, or lie a prostrate suppliant to a feeble arm! Upon this ability of God, our Saviour built his petitions; *Heb.* 5. 7, *He offered up strong cries unto him that was able to save him from death.* Abraham's faith rested upon the same foundation, *Rom.* 4. 21; and the captive church supplicates God to act according to the *greatness of his power, Psal.* 79. 11. In all our addresses this is to be eyed and considered, God is able to help, and to relieve, let my misery be never so great, and my strength never so weak. *If thou wilt thou canst make me clean,* was the consideration the leper had when he came to worship Christ; he was clear in his power, and therefore worshipped him, though he was not equally clear in his will, *Mat.* 8. 2. All worship is wrong that is not directed to, and conducted by the thoughts of this attribute, whose assistance we need. When we beg the pardon of our sins, we should eye mercy and power; and when we beg his righting us in any case where we are unjustly oppressed, we do not eye righteousness without power; when we plead the performance of his promise, we do not regard his faithfulness only without the prop of his power. As power ushers in all the attributes of God in their exercise and manifestation in the world, so should it be the object our eyes should be fixed upon in all our acts of worship:

* Capel. in 1 Tim. 1. 17.

as without his power his other attributes would be useless, so without apprehensions of his power our prayers will be faithless and comfortless. The title of the Lord's prayer directs us to a prospect both of his goodness and power; his goodness in the word *Father*, his greatness, excellency, and power in the word *heaven*. The heedless consideration of the infinity of this perfection roots up piety in the midst of us, and makes us so careless in worship. Did we think more of that power that raised the world out of nothing; that orders all creatures by an act of his will; that performed so great an exploit as that of our redemption, when masterless sin had triumphed over the world, we should give God the honour and adoration which so great an excellency challengeth and deserves at our hands, though we ourselves had not been the work of his hands, or the monuments of his strength; how could any creature engross to itself that reverence from us which is due to the powerful Creator, of whom it comes infinitely short in strength as well as wisdom?

7. From this we have a ground for the belief of *the resurrection*. God aims at the glory of his power, as well as the glory of any other attribute. Moses else would not have selected this as the main argument in his pleading with God, for the sheathing the sword which he began to draw out against them in the wilderness, *The nations will say, because the Lord was not able to bring these people into the land which he sware to them*, &c. *Numb.* 14. 16. As the finding out the particles of the dust of our bodies discovers the vastness of his knowledge, so to raise them, will manifest the glory of his power as much as creation: bodies that have mouldered away into multitudes of atoms, been resolved into the elements, passed through varieties of changes; been sometimes the matter to lodge the form of a plant, or been turned into the substance of a fish or fowl, or vapoured up into a cloud, and been part of that matter which hath compacted a thunderbolt; disposed of in places far distant, scattered by the winds, swallowed and concocted by beasts; for these to be called out from their different places of abode to meet

in one body, and be restored to their former consistency in the *twinkling of an eye*, is a consideration that may justly amaze us, and our shallow understandings are too feeble to comprehend it.

But is it not credible, since all the disputes against it may be silenced by reflections on infinite power, which nothing can oppose, for which nothing can be esteemed too difficult to effect, which doth not imply a contradiction in itself. It was no less amazing to the blessed Virgin to hear a message that she should conceive a son in the way then announced; but she is quickly answered by the angel, with a *Nothing is impossible to God, Luke* 1. 34, 37. The distinct parts of our bodies cannot be hid from his all-seeing eye, wherever they are lodged, and in all the changes they pass through, as was discoursed when the omniscience of God was handled; shall then the collection of them together be too hard for his invincible power and strength, and the uniting all those parts into a body, with new dispositions, to receive their several souls, be too great a work for that power which never yet was acquainted with any bar? Was not the miracle of our Saviour's multiplying the loaves, suppose it had not been by a new creation, but a collection of grain from several parts, very near as stupendous as this? Had any one of us been the only creatures made just before the matter of the world, and beheld that inform chaos covered with a thick *darkness*, mentioned *Gen.* 1. 2, would not the report, that from this dark deep, next to nothing, should be raised such a multitude of comely creatures, with such innumerable varieties of members, voices, colours, motions, and such numbers of shining stars; a bright sun, one uniform body of light from this darkness, that should, like a giant, rejoice to run a race for many thousands of years together, without stop or weariness: would not all these have seemed as incredible as the collection of scattered dust? What was it that erected the innumerable host of heaven, the glorious angels, and glittering stars, for aught we know, more numerous than the bodies of men, but an act of divine will;

and shall the power that wrought this, sink under the charge of gathering some dispersed atoms, and compacting them into a human body?

* Can you tell how the dust of the ground was kneaded by God into the body of man, and changed into flesh, skin, bones, sinews, veins, arteries, and blood, and fitted for so many several activities, when a human soul was breathed into it? Can you imagine how a rib taken from Adam's side a lifeless bone, was formed into head, hands, feet, eyes? Why may not the matter of men which have been, be restored, as well as that which was not, be first erected? Is it harder to repair those things which were, than to create those things which were not? Is there not the same artificer? Hath any disease or sickliness abated his power? Is *the Ancient of days* grown feeble; or shall the elements and other creatures, that always yet obeyed his command, ruffle against his raising voice, and refuse to disgorge those remains of human bodies they have swallowed up? Did the whole world, and all the parts of it, rise at his word, and shall not some parts of the world, the dust of the dead, stand up out of the graves at a word of the same mighty efficacy? Do we not annually see those marks of power which may stun our incredulity of this concern? Do you see in a small acorn or little seed, any such sights, as a tree with body, bark, branches, leaves, flowers, and fruit? Do you know the invisible corners where they lurk in that little body? And yet these you afterwards view rising up when sown in the ground, that you could not possibly have any prospect of when you rolled it in your hand. And why may not all the particulars of our bodies, however disposed as to their distinct natures invisibly to us, remain distinct, as well as if you mingle a thousand seeds together, they will come up in their distinct kinds, and preserve their distinct virtues?

Again, is not the making heaven and earth, the union of the divine and human nature, eternity and infirmity, to make a virgin conceive a son, bear the Creator, and bring

* Lingend, tom. 3. p. 779, 780.

forth the Redeemer, to form the blood of God of the flesh of a virgin, a greater work than the calling together and uniting the scattered parts of our bodies, which are all of one nature and matter? And since the power of God is manifested in pardoning innumerable sins, is not the scattering our *transgressions, as far as the east is from the west*, as the expression is, *Psa.* 103. 12, and casting such numbers into the depths of the sea, which is God's power over himself, a greater argument of might, than the recalling and repairing the atoms of our bodies from their various receptacles? It is not hard for them to believe this of the resurrection, that have been sensible of the weight and force of their sins, and the power of God in pardoning and vanquishing that mighty resistance which was made in their hearts against the power of his renewing and sanctifying grace. The consideration of the infinite power of God, is a good ground of the belief of the resurrection.

8. Since the power of God is so great and incomprehensible, how strange is it that it should *be contemned and abused* by the creatures as it is? The power of God is beaten down by some, outraged by others, blasphemed by many under their sufferings. Stripping God of the honour of his creation, and the glory of his preservation of the world, falls under this charge: thus do they that deny his framing the world alone, or thought the first matter was not of God's creation: and such as fancied an evil principle, the author of all evil, as God is the author of all good, and so exempt from the power of God, that it could not be vanquished by him. These things have formerly found defenders in the world; but they are in themselves ridiculous and vain, and have no footing in common reason, and are not worthy of debate in a christian auditory.

In general, all idolatry in the world arose from the want of a due notion of this infinite power. The heathen thought one God was not sufficient for the managing all things in the world, and therefore they feigned several gods that had several charges: as Ceres presided over the fruits of the earth; Esculapius over the cure of dis-

tempers; Mercury for merchandize and trade; Mars for war and battles; Apollo and Minerva for learning and ingenious arts; and Fortune for casual things. From whence rose the other sort of idolatry, adoring our gold, our dependencies on and trusting in creatures for help, but from ignorance of God's power, or mean and slender apprehensions of it?

First, There is a *contempt* of it. Secondly, An *abuse* of it. 1. It is contemned in *every sin*, especially in *obstinacy* in sin. All sin whatsoever is built upon some false notion or monstrous conception of one or the other of God's perfections, and in particular of this. It includes a secret and lurking imagination, that we are able to grapple with omnipotence, and enter the lists with the Almighty; what else can be judged of the apostle's expression, *Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy, are we stronger than he?* 1 *Cor.* 10. 22. Do we think we have an arm too powerful for that justice we provoke, and can repel that vengeance we exasperate? Do we think we are an even match for God, and are able to despoil him of his divinity? To despise his will, violate his order; practise what he forbids with a severe threatening, and pledges his power to make good, is to pretend to have *an arm like God*, and be able to *thunder with a voice* equal or superior to him, as the expression is, *Job* 40. 9. All security in sin is of this strain; when men are not concerned at divine threatenings, nor staggered in their sinful race, they intimate, that the declarations of divine power are but vain-glorious boastings; that God is not so strong and able as he reports himself to be; and therefore they will dare him to try, whether the strength of his arm be as forcible as the words of his mouth are terrible in his threats; this is to believe themselves creators, not creatures. We magnify God's power in our wants, and debase it in our rebellions; as though omnipotence were only able to supply our necessities, and unable to revenge the injuries we offer him.

2. This power is contemned in *distrust* of God. All distrust is founded in a doubting of his truth, as if he

would not be as good as his word; or of his omniscience, as if he had not a memory to retain his word; or of his power, as if he could not be as great as his word. We measure the infinite power of God by the short line of our understandings, as if infinite strength were bounded within the narrow compass of our finite reason; as if he could do no more than we were able to do.

How soon did those Israelites lose the remembrance of God's out-stretched arm, when they uttered that atheistical speech, *Can God furnish a table in the wilderness, Psal.* 78. 9. As if he that turned the dust of Egypt into lice, for the punishment of their oppressors, could not turn the dust of the wilderness into corn, for the support of their bodies? As if he that had miraculously rebuked the Red sea for their safety, could not provide bread for their nourishment? Though they had seen the Egyptians with lost lives in the morning, in the same place where their lives had been miraculously preserved in the evening; yet they disgrace that experienced power, by opposing to it the stature of the Anakims, the strength of their cities, and the height of their walls, *Wherefore hath the Lord brought us into this land to fall by the sword? Numb.* 13. 32, and 14. 3. As though the giants of Canaan were too strong for him, for whom they had seen the armies of Egypt too weak. How did they contract the almighty power of God into the littleness of a man, as if he must needs sink under the sword of a Canaanite?

This distrust must arise either from a flat atheism, a denial of the being of God, or his government of the world; or unworthy conceits of a weakness in him, that he had made creatures too hard for himself; that he were not strong enough to grapple with those mighty Anakims, and give them the possession of Canaan against so great a force. Distrust of him implies either that he was always destitute of power, or that his power is exhausted by his former works, or that it is limited and near a period; it is to deny him to be the Creator that moulded heaven and earth, Why should we by distrust

put a slight upon that power which he hath so often expressed, and which in the minutest works of his hands surmount the force of the sharpest understanding?

3. It is contemned in too great a *fear of man*, which ariseth from a distrust of divine power. Fear of man, is a crediting the might of man with a disrepute of the arm of God; it takes away the glory of his might, and renders the creature stronger than God, and God more feeble than a mortal; as if the arm of man were a rod of iron, and the arm of God a brittle reed. How often do men tremble at the threatenings and hectorings of ruffians, yet will stand as stakes against the precepts and threatenings of God, as though he had less power to preserve us, than enemies had to destroy? With what disdain does God speak to men infected with this humour? *Who art thou, that art afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundation of the earth; and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor? Isa.* 51. 12, 13.

To fear man that is as grass, that cannot think a thought without a divine concourse, that cannot breathe, but by a divine power, nor touch a hair without license first granted from heaven; this is a forgetfulness, and consequently a slight, of that infinite power, which hath been manifested in founding the earth and garnishing the heavens. All fear of man, in the way of our duty, does in some sort thrust out the remembrance, and discredit the great actions of the Creator. Would not a mighty prince think it a disparagement to him, if his servant should decline his command for fear of one of his subjects? And hath not the great God just cause to think himself disgraced by us, when we deny him obedience for fear of a creature; as though he had but an infant ability too feeble to bear us out in duty, and incapable to balance the strength of an arm of flesh?

4. It is contemned by *trusting in ourselves*, in *means*, in *man*, more than in *God*. When in any distress we try every creature-refuge, before we have recourse to

God; and when we apply ourselves to him, we do it with such slight and careless frames, and with so much despondency, as if we despaired either of his ability or will to help us; and implore him with cooler affections, than we solicit creatures; or, when in a disease we depend upon the virtue of the medicine, the ability of the physician, and reflect not upon that power that endued the medicine with that virtue, and supports the quality in it, and concurs to the operation of it. When we depend upon the activity of the means, as if they had power originally in themselves, and not derivatively; and do not eye the power of God animating and assisting them. We cannot expect relief from any thing with a neglect of God, but we render it in our thoughts more powerful than God; we acknowledge a greater fulness in a shallow stream, than in an eternal spring; we do in effect depose the true God, and create to ourselves a new one; we assert by such a kind of acting, that the creature, if not superior, is yet equal with God and independent on him. When we trust in our own strength, without begging his assistance; or boast of our own strength, without acknowledging his concurrence, as the Assyrian; *By the strength of my hand have I done this, I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man, Isa.* 10. 13. It is as if the *axe should boast itself against him that hews therewith*, and think itself more mighty than the arm that wields it, ver. 15, when we trust in others more than in God. Thus God upbraids those by the prophet that sought help from Egypt, telling them, *The Egyptians were men and not gods, Isa.* 31. 3; intimating that by their dependance on them, they rendered them gods and not men, and advanced them from the state of creatures to that of almighty deities. It is to set a pile of dust, a heap of ashes, above him that created and preserves the world. To trust in a creature, is to make it as infinite as God; to do that which is impossible in itself to be done. God himself cannot make a creature infinite, for that were to make him God.

It is also contemned when we ascribe what we receive to the power of instruments, and not to the power

of God. Men, in whatsoever they do for us, are but the tools whereby the Creator works. Is it not a disgrace to the limner to admire his pencil, and not himself; to the artificer, to admire his file and engines, and not his power? Is it *not I*, saith Paul, *that labour, but the grace*, the efficacious grace *of God which is in me.* Whatsoever good we do is from him, not from ourselves; to ascribe it to ourselves, or to instruments, is to overlook and contemn his power.

5. *Unbelief of the gospel* is a contempt and disowning divine power. This perfection hath been discovered in the conception of Christ, the union of the two natures, his resurrection from the grave, the restoration of the world, and the conversion of men, more than in the creation of the world. Then what a disgrace is unbelief to all that power, that so severely punished the Jews for the rejecting the gospel; turned so many nations from their beloved superstitions; humbled the power of princes and the wisdom of philosophers; chased devils from their temples, by the weakness of fishermen; planted the standard of the gospel against the common notions and inveterate customs of the world? What a disgrace is unbelief to this power, which hath preserved christianity from being extirpated by the force of men and devils, and kept it flourishing in the midst of sword, fire, and executioners; that hath made the simplicity of the gospel overpower the eloquence of orators, and multiplied it from the ashes of martyrs, when it was destitute of all human assistances? Not heartily to believe and embrace that doctrine which hath been attended with such marks of power, is a high reflection upon this divine perfection, so highly manifested in the first publication, propagation, and preservation of it.

II. The power of God is *abused*, as well as contemned,

1. When we make use of it to *justify contradictions.* The doctrine of transubstantiation is an abuse of this power. When the maintainers of it cannot answer the absurdities alledged against it, they have recourse to the power of God. It implies a contradiction, that the same

body should be on earth and in heaven at the same instant of time; that it should be at the right hand of God and in the mouth and stomach of a man; that it should be a body of flesh, and yet bread to the eye and to the taste; that it should be visible and invisible, a glorious body, and yet eaten by a creature; that it should be multiplied in a thousand places, and yet an entire body in every one, where there is no member to be seen, no flesh to be tasted; that it should be above us in the highest heavens, and yet at the same time be within us. Such contradictions as these are an abuse of the power of God. Again, we abuse this power when we believe every idle story that is reported, because God is able to make it so if he pleased. We may as well believe Esop's fables to be true, that birds spoke and beasts reasoned, because the power of God can enable such creatures to such acts. God's power is not the rule of our belief of a thing without the exercise of it in matter of fact, and the declaration of it upon sufficient evidence.

2. The power of God is abused by presuming on it, without using the *means* he *hath appointed.* When men sit with folded arms, and make confidence in his power a glorious title to their idleness and disobedience; they would have his strength do all, and his precept should move them to do nothing; this is a trust of his power against his command, a pretended glorifying of his power with a slight of his sovereignty. Though God be almighty, yet for the most part he exerciseth his might in giving life and success to second causes and lawful endeavours. When we stay in the mouth of danger, without any call ordering us to continue, and against a door of providence opened for our rescue, and sanctuary ourselves in the power of God without any promise, without any providence conducting us; this is not to glorify the the divine might, but to neglect it, in neglecting the means which his power affords us for our escape. * To condemn it to our humours; to work miracles for us according to our wills, and against his own. God could have

* Harwood, p. 13.

sent a worm to be Herod's executioner, when he sought the life of our Saviour, or employed an angel from heaven to have tied his hands or stopped his breath, and not put Joseph upon a flight to Egypt with our Saviour; yet had it not been an abuse of the power of God for Joseph to have neglected the precept, and slighted the means God gave him for the preserving his own life and that of the child's? Christ himself, when the Jews consulted to destroy him, presumed not upon the power of God to secure him, but used ordinary means for his preservation, by *walking no more openly*, but retiring himself into a city near the wilderness till the *hour was come*, and the call of his Father manifest, *John* 11. 53, 54. A rash running upon danger, though for the truth itself, is presuming upon, and consequently an abuse of, this power; a proud challenging of it to serve our turns against the authority of his will, and the force of his precept; a not resting in his ordinate power, but demanding his absolute power to pleasure our follies and presumptions; concluding and expecting more from it than what is authorised by his will.

9. Instruction. If infinite power be a peculiar property of God, how *miserable* will all wicked rebels be under this power of God? Men may break his laws, but they cannot impair his arm; they may slight his word, but they cannot resist his power. If he swear that he will sweep a place with the besom of destruction, *As he hath thought, so shall it come to pass; and as he hath purposed, so shall it stand, Isa.* 14. 23, 24. Rebels against an earthly prince may exceed him in strength, and be more powerful than their sovereign; but none can equal God, much less exceed him. As none can exercise an act of hostility against him without his permissive will, so none can struggle from under his hand without his positive will. He hath an arm not to be moved, a hand not to be turned aside. God is represented on his throne like a *jasper stone*, *Revel.* 4. 3, as one of invincible power when he comes to judge; the jasper is a stone which withstands the greatest force.*

* Grot. in loc.

Though men resist the order of his laws, they cannot resist the sentence of their punishment, nor the execution of it. None can any more exempt themselves from the arm of his strength than they can from the authority of his dominion. As they must bow to his sovereignty, so they must sink under his force. A prisoner in this world may make his escape, but a prisoner in the world to come cannot; *There is none that can deliver out of thy hand, Job* 10. 7. There is none to deliver when he *tears in pieces, Psal.* 50. 22. His strength is uncontroulable; hence his throne is represented as a *fiery flame, Dan.* 7. 9. As a spark of fire hath power to kindle one thing after another, and to increase till it consumes a forest, a city, swallow up all combustible matter, till it consumes a world, and many worlds, if they were in being. What power hath a tree to resist the fire, though it seems mighty when it out-braves the winds? What man to this day hath been able to free himself from that chain of death God put upon him for his revolt? And if he be too feeble to rescue himself from a temporal, much less from an eternal death. The devils have to this minute groaned under the pile of wrath, without any success in delivering themselves by all their strength, which much surmounts all the strength of mankind, nor have they any hopes to work their rescue to eternity.

How foolish is every sinner? Can we poor worms brave it out against infinite power? We cannot resist the meanest creatures when God commissions them, and puts a sword into their hands. They will not, no not the worms, be startled at the glory of a king, when they have their Creator's warrant to be his executioners, *Acts* 12. 23. Who can withstand him, when he commands the waves and inundations of the sea to leap over the shore; when he divides the ground in earthquakes, and makes it gape wide to swallow the inhabitants of it; when the air is corrupted to breed pestilences; when storms and showers unseasonably falling, putrify the fruits of the earth; what created power can mend the matter, and with a prevailing voice say to him, What dost thou?

There are two attributes God will make illustrious in

hell to the full; his wrath and his power. *What if God willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction?* If it were mere wrath, and no power to second it, it were not so terrible; but it is *wrath* and *power*, both are joined together. It is not only a sharp sword, but a powerful arm; and not only that, for then it were well for the damned creature. We may have many sharp blows, and from a strong arm, without putting forth the highest strength of that arm. But in this God designs to make his power known and conspicuous; he takes the sword, as it were, in both hands, that he may shew the strength of his arm in striking the harder blow; and therefore the apostle calls it the *glory of his power*, 2 *Thess.* 1. 9, which puts a sting into his wrath; and it is called the *fierceness of the wrath of the Almighty*, *Revel.* 19. 15. God will do it in such a manner as to make men sensible of his omnipotence in every stroke. How great must that vengeance be that is backed by all the strength of God? When there will be a powerful wrath without a powerful compassion; when all his power shall be exercised in punishing, and not the least mite of it exercised in pitying; how irresistible will be the load of such a weighty hand? How can the *dust of the balance* break the mighty bars, or get out of the lists of so powerful a vengeance, or hope for any grain of comfort? Oh, that every obstinate sinner would think of this, and consider his unmeasurable boldness in thinking himself able to grapple with omnipotence! What force can any have to resist the presence of him before whom rocks melt, and the heavens shall at length be shrivelled up as a parchment by the last fire? As the light of God's face is too dazzling to be beheld by us; so the arm of his power is too mighty to be opposed by us. His almighty power is above the reach of our potsherd strength, as his infinity is above the capacity of our purblind understandings. God were not omnipotent if his power could be rendered ineffectual by any.

A second use of this point from the consideration of the infinite power of God, is of *comfort*. As omnipo-

tence is an ocean that cannot be fathomed, so the comforts from it are streams that cannot be exhausted. What joy can be wanting to him that finds himself folded in the arms of omnipotence?

This perfection is made over to believers in the covenant, as well as any other attribute; *I am the Lord your God;* therefore that power which is as essential to the godhead as any other perfection of his nature, is in the rights and extent of it assured to you. Nay, we may not say it is made over more than any other, because it is that which animates every other perfection, and is the spirit that gives them motion and appearance in the world. If God had expressed himself in particular, as I am a *true* God, a *wise* God, a *loving* God, a *righteous* God, I am *yours*, what would all or any of those have signified, unless the other also had been implied, as, *I am an Almighty God, I am your God?* In God's making over himself in any particular attribute, this of his power is included in every one, without which all his other grants would be insignificant. It is a comfort that power is in the hand of God; it can never be better placed, for he can never use his power to injure his confiding creature. If it were in our own hands, we might use it to injure ourselves. It is a power in the hands of an indulgent father, not a hard-hearted tyrant. It is a just power, *His right hand is full of righteousness, Psal.* 48. 10, because of his righteousness he can never use it ill, and because of his wisdom he can never use it unseasonably. Men that have strength often misplace the actings of it, because of their folly; and sometimes employ it to base ends, because of their wickedness; but this power in God is always awakened by goodness and conducted by wisdom; it is never exercised by self-will and passion, but according to the immutable rule of his own nature, which is righteousness. How comfortable is it to think that you have a God that can do what he pleases; nothing so difficult but he can effect, nothing so strong but he can over-rule? You need not dread men, since you have one to restrain them; nor fear devils, since you have one to chain them. No creature but is acted by this power; no creature but

must fall upon the withdrawing of this power. It was not all laid out in creation: it is not weakened by his preservation of things; he yet hath a fulness of power, and a residue of spirit. For whom should that eternal *arm of the Lord* be displayed, and that incomprehensible *thunder of his power* be shot out, but for those for whose sake and for whose comfort it is revealed in his word?

In particular, 1. Here is comfort in all *afflictions* and *distresses.* Our evils can never be so great to oppress us as his power is great to deliver us. The same power that brought a world out of a chaos, and constituted, and hath hitherto preserved, the regular motion of the stars, can bring order out of our confusions, and light out of our darkness. When our Saviour was in the greatest distress, and beheld the face of his Father frowning, while he was upon the cross, in his complaint to him he exercises faith upon his power, *Eli, Eli; my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me, Matt.* 27. 46; that is, *My strong, my strong; El,* is a name of power belonging to God. He comforts himself in his power, while he complains of his frowns. Follow his pattern, and forget not that power that can scatter the clouds as well as gather them together. The Psalmist's support in his distress was in the creative power of God, *My help comes from the Lord which made heaven and earth, Psal.* 121. 2.

2. It is comfort in all strong and stirring *corruptions* and mighty *temptations.* It is by this we may arm ourselves, and *be strong in the power of his might, Eph.* 6. 10. By this we may conquer principalities and powers as dreadful as hell, but not so mighty as heaven. By this we may triumph over lusts within, too strong for an arm of flesh. By this the devils that have possessed us may be cast out; the ruined state of our souls may be repaired, and the sons of Anak laid low. That power that brought light out of darkness, and overmastered the deformity of the chaos, and set bounds to the ocean, and dried up the Red sea by a rebuke; can quell the tumults in our spirits, and level spiritual Goliahs by his word. When the disciples heard that terrifying speech of our

Saviour, concerning rich men, that it was *easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God, Matt.* 19. 24, to entertain the gospel, which commanded self-denial; and that, because of the allurements of the world, and the strong habits of sin in their souls, Christ refers them to the power of God, ver. 26, who could expel those ill habits, and plant good ones; *with men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.* There is no resistance, but he can surmount; no strong hold but he can demolish; no tower, but he can level.

3. It is comfort from hence, that all promises shall be *performed.* Goodness is sufficient to make a promise, but power is necessary to perform it. Men that are honest, cannot often make good their words, because something may intervene that may shorten their ability; but nothing can disable God, without diminishing his Godhead. He hath an infinity of power to accomplish his word, as well as an infinity of goodness to make and utter his word. That might whereby he *made heaven and earth,* and his *keeping truth for ever,* are joined together, *Psa.* 146. 5, 6. His Father's faithfulness, and his creative power are linked together. It is upon this basis the covenant, and every part of it, is established, and stands as firm as the almighty power of God, whereby he sprung up the earth, and reared the heavens. No power can *resist his will, Rom.* 9. 19. *Who can disannul his purpose, and turn back his hand when it is stretched out? Isa.* 14. 27. His word is unalterable, and his power is invincible. He could not deceive himself, for he knew his own strength when he promised: no unexpected event can change his resolution, because nothing can happen without the compass of his foresight. No created strength can stop him in his action, because all creatures are ready to serve him at his command; not the devils in hell, nor all the wicked men on earth, since he hath strength to restrain them, and an arm to punish them. What can be too hard for him that created heaven and earth? Hence it was, that when God promised any thing anciently to his people, he used often the name of the *Al-*

mighty, the *Lord that created heaven and earth*, as that which was an undeniable answer to any objection, against any thing that might be made against the greatness and stupendousness of any promise; by that name in all his works of grace was he *known* to them, *Exod.* 6. 3. When we are sure of his will, we need not question his strength, since he never over-engages in any thing above his ability. He that could not be resisted by any thing in creation, nor vanquished by devils in redemption, can never want power to glorify his faithfulness in his accomplishment of whatsoever he hath promised.

4. From this infinity of power in God we have ground of *assurance for perseverance*. Since conversion is resembled to the works of creation and resurrection, two great marks of his strength, he doth not surely employ himself in the first work of changing the heart, to let any created strength baffle that power which he began and intends to glorify. It was this might that struck off the chain, and expelled that strong one that possessed you. What if you are too weak to keep him out of his lost possession, will God lose the glory of his first strength, by suffering his foiled adversary to regain his former usurpation? His out-stretched arm will not do less by his spiritual, than it did by his national Israel: it guarded them all the way to Canaan, and left them not to shift for themselves, after he had struck off the fetters of Egypt, and buried their enemies in the Red Sea, *Deut.* 1. 31. This greatness of the Father above all, our Saviour makes the ground of believers continuance for ever, against the blasts of hell and engines of the world; *My Father is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hands*, *John* 10. 29. Our keeping is not in our own weak hands, but in the hands of him who is mighty to save. That power of God keeps us which intends our salvation. In all fears of falling away, shelter yourselves in the power of God: *he shall be holden up*, saith the apostle, speaking concerning one weak in faith; and no other reason is rendered by him but this, *for God is able to make him to stand*, *Rom.* 14. 4.

From this attribute of the infinite power of God, we

have a ground of comfort in the *lowest estate of the church.* Let the state of the church be never so deplorable, the condition never so desperate, that power that created the world, and shall raise the bodies of men, can create a happy state for the church, and raise her from an overwhelming grave: though the enemies trample upon her, they cannot upon the arm that holds her, which by the least motion of it, can lift her up above the heads of her adversaries, and make them feel the thunder of that power that none can understand: by the *blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils they are consumed,* they *shall be scattered as chaff before the wind, Job* 4. 9. If once he *draw his hand out of his bosom, Psal.* 74. 11. all must fly before him, or sink under him. And when there is *none to help, his own arm sustains him, and brings salvation, and his fury doth uphold him, Isa.* 63. 5. What if the church is made to totter by the underminings of hell? What if it hath a sad heart and wet eyes? In what a little moment can he make the night turn into day, and make the Jews that were preparing for death in Shushan, triumph over the malice of their enemies, and march in one hour with swords in their hands, that expected the last hour *ropes about their necks? Esth.* 9. 1, 5. If Israel be pursued by Pharaoh, the sea shall open its arms to protect them: if they be thirsty, a rock shall spout out water to refresh them: if they be hungry, heaven shall be their granary for manna; if Jerusalem be besieged, and hath not force enough to encounter Sennacherib, an angel shall turn the camp into an aceldama, a field of blood. His people shall not want deliverances, till God want a power of working miracles for their security: he is more jealous of his power, than the church can be of her safety. And if we should want other arguments to press him, we may implore him by virtue of his power: for when there is nothing in the church as a motive to him to save it, there is enough in his own name, and the illustration of his power, *Psal.* 106. 8. Who can grapple with the omnipotence of that God, who is jealous of, and zealous for the honour of it? And therefore God, for the most part,

takes such opportunities to deliver, wherein his Almightiness may be most conspicuous, and his counsels most admirable. He awakened not himself to deliver Israel, till they were upon the brink of the Red Sea; nor to rescue the three children, till they were in the fiery furnace; nor Daniel, till he was in the lions' den. It is in the weakness of his creature that his strength is perfected; not in a way of addition of perfectness to it, but in a way of manifestation of the perfection of it. As it is the perfection of the sun to shine and enlighten the world, not that the sun receives an increase of light by the darting of his beams, but discovers his glory to the admiration of men, and pleasure of the world. If it were not for such occasions, the world would not regard the mightiness of God, nor know what power were in him. It traverses the stage in its fulness and liveliness upon such occasions, when the enemies are strong, and their strength edged with an intense hatred, and but little time between the contrivance and execution. It is the great comfort that the lowest distresses of the church are a fit scene for the discovery of this attribute, and that the glory of God's omnipotence, and the church's security, are so straitly linked together. It is a promise that will never be forgotten by God, and ought never to be forgotten by us, that *in this mountain, the hand of the Lord shall rest;* that is, the power of the Lord shall abide: *and Moab shall be trodden under him, even as straw is trodden down from the dunghill.* And the plagues of Babylon *shall come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; for strong is the Lord who judges her,* *Rev.* 18. 8.

The third Use is for exhortation.

1. *Meditate* on this power of God, and *press it often upon your minds.* We conclude many things of God that we do not practically enjoy the comfort of, for want of deep thoughts of it, and frequent inspection into it. We believe God to be true, yet distrust him; we acknowledge him powerful, yet fear the motion of every straw. Many truths, though assented to in our understanding, are kept under darkness by corrupt affections, and have not their due influence, because they are not brought

forth into the open air of our souls by meditation. If we will but search our hearts; we shall find it is the power of God we often doubt of. When the heart of Ahaz and his subjects trembled at the combination of the Syrian and Israelitish kings against him, for want of confidence in the power of God, God sends his prophet with commission to work a miraculous sign at his own choice, to rear up his fainting heart; and when he refused to ask a sign out of diffidence of that almighty power, the prophet complains of it as an affront to his Master, *Isa.* 7. 12, 13. Moses, so great a friend of God, was overtaken with this kind of unbelief, after all the experiments of God's miraculous acts in Egypt; the answer God gives him, manifests this to be at the core: *Is the Lord's hand waxed short? Numb.* 21. 23.

For want of actuated thoughts of this, we are many times turned from our known duty by the blast of a creature; as though man had more power to dismay us, than God had to support us in his commanded way. The belief of God's power is one of the first steps to all religion; without settled thoughts of it, we cannot pray with animation and faith, for the obtaining the mercies we want, or averting the evils we fear; we should not love him, unless we are persuaded he hath a power to bless us; nor fear him, unless we were persuaded of his power to punish us. The frequent thoughts of this would render our faith more stable, and our hopes more steadfast; it would make us more feeble to sin, and more careful to obey. When the Virgin staggered at the message of the angel, that she should *bear a Son*, he in his answer turns her to the creative power of God, *The power of the highest shall over-shadow thee, Luke* 1. 35. Which seems to be in allusion to the Spirit's moving upon the face of the deep, and bringing a comely world out of a confused mass. Is it harder for God to make a Virgin conceive a Son by the power of his Spirit, than to make a world? Why doth he reveal himself so often under the title of Almighty, and press it upon us, but that we should press it upon ourselves? And shall we be forgetful of that, which every thing about us,

every thing within us is, a mark of? How come we by a power of seeing and hearing, a faculty and act of understanding and will, but by this power framing us, this power assisting us? What though the thunder of his power cannot be understood, no more can any other perfection of his nature; shall we therefore seldom think of it? The sea cannot be fathomed, yet the merchant excuses not himself from sailing upon the surface of it. We cannot glorify God, without due consideration of this attribute; for his power is his glory as much as any other, and called both by the name of glory, *Rom.* 3. 4, speaking of Christ's resurrection by the glory of the Father; and also *the riches of his glory*, *Eph.* 8. 16. Those that have strong temptations in their course, and over-pressing corruptions in their hearts, have need to think of it out of interest, since nothing but this can relieve them. Those that have experimented the working of it in their new creation, are obliged to think of it out of gratitude. It was this mighty power over himself that gave rise to all that pardoning grace already conferred, or hereafter expected; without it our souls had been consumed, the world overturned; we could not have expected a happy heaven, but must have lain in the torment of an eternal hell; had not the power of his mercy exceeded that of his justice, and his infinite power executed what his infinite wisdom had contrived for our redemption. How much also should we be raised in our admirations of God, and delight ourselves in contemplating that might that can raise innumerable worlds in those infinite imaginary spaces without this globe of heaven and earth, and exceed inconceivably what he hath done in the creation of this?

2. From pressing the consideration of this upon ourselves, let us be induced to *trust God upon the account* of his power. The main end of the revelation of his power to the Patriarchs, and of the miraculous operations of it in Egypt, was to induce them to an entire reposing of themselves in God; and the psalmist scarcely speaks of the divine omnipotenee without making this inference from it; or exhorts to a trust in God, but he backs it

with a consideration of his power in creation, it being the chief support of the soul, *Happy is he whose hope is in the Lord his God, which made heaven and earth, the sea and all that therein is, Psal.* 146. 1. That power is invincible that drew the world out of nothing; nothing can happen to us harder than the making the world without the concurrence of instruments; no difficulty can nonplus that strength that hath drawn all things out of nothing, or out of a confused matter next to nothing; no power can rifle what we commit to him, 2 *Tim.* 1. 12. He is all power, above the reach of all power; all other powers in the world flowing from him, or depending on him. He is worthy to be trusted, since we know him to be true, without ever breaking his word, and omnipotent, never failing of his purpose; and a confidence in it is the chief act whereby we can glorify this power. A strong God, and a weak faith, do not suit well together. Indeed we are more engaged to a trust in divine power than the antient Patriarchs were; they had the verbal declaration of his power, and many of them little other evidence of it, than in the creation of the world; and their faith in God being established in this first discovery of his omnipotence, drew out itself further to believe, that whatsoever God promised by his word, he was able to perform, as well as the creation of the world out of nothing; which seems to be the design of the apostle, *Heb.* 11. 3. Not barely to speak of the creation of the world by God, which was a thing the Hebrews understood well enough from their ancient oracles; but to shew the foundation of the Patriarchs' faith, viz. God making the world *by his word*, and what use they made of the discovery of his power in that, to lead them to believe the promise of God concerning the seed of the woman to be brought into the world. But we have not only the same foundation, but superadded demonstrations of this attribute in the conception of our Saviour, the union of the two natures, the glorious redemption, the propagation of the gospel, and the new creation of the world. They relied upon the bare power of God, without those more illustrious appearances of it, which have

been witnessed in the after ages. We have the wonderful effects of that which they had but obscure expectations of.

1. Consider, trust in God can never be without taking in God's power *as a concurrent foundation with his truth.* It is the main ground of trust, and so set forth in the prophet, *Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength, Isa.* 26. 4. The faith of the ancients, so recommended *Heb.* 11, had this chiefly for its ground; and the faith in gospel-times is called a *trusting on his arm, Isa.* 51. 5. All the attributes of God are the objects of our veneration, but they do not equally contribute to produce trust in our hearts; his eternity, simplicity, infinity, delight and astonish our minds when we consider them.* But there is no immediate tendency in their nature to allure us to confidence in him, no not in an innocent state; much less in a lapsed and revolted condition; but the other perfections of his nature, as his holiness, righteousness, and mercy, are amiable to us in regard of the immediate operations of them upon and about the creature, and so have something in their own nature to allure us to repose ourselves in him; but yet they cannot engage us to an intire trust in him, without reflecting upon his ability, which can only render them useful and successful to the creature. For whatever stand in the way of his holy, righteous, and merciful proceedings towards his creatures, are not over-mastered by those perfections, but by that strength of his which can only relieve us in concurrence with the other attributes. How could his mercy succour us without his arm, or his wisdom guide us without his hand, or his truth perform promises to us without his strength? As no attribute can act without it, so in our addresses to him upon the account of any particular perfection in the Godhead according to our indigency, the eye must be perpetually fixed upon this of his power; and our faith would be feeble and dispirited without this; without this, his holiness, which

* Amyrant, Moral. Tom. 5. p. 170.

hates sin, would not be regarded; and his mercy, pitying a penitent sinner, would not be valued. As this power is the ground of a wicked man's fear, so it is the ground of a good man's trust. This was that which was the principal support of Abraham, not barely his promise, but his ability to make it good, *Rom.* 4. 21. And when he was commanded to sacrifice Isaac, he trusted the ability of God to raise him up again, *Heb.* 11. 19. All faith would droop, and die without leaning upon this. All those attributes which we consider as moral in God, would have no influence upon us, without this, which we consider physically in God. Though we value the kindness men may express to us in our distresses, yet we make them not the objects of our confidence, unless they have an ability to act what they express. There can be no trust in God without an eye to his power.

2. Sometimes the power of God is *the sole object of trust.* As when we have no promise to assure us of his will, we have nothing else to fix upon but his ability; and that not his absolute power, but his ordinate, in the way of his providence; we must not trust in it so, as to expect he should please our humour with fresh miracles, but rest upon his power, and leave the manner to his will. Asa when ready to conflict with the vast Ethiopian army pleaded nothing but this *power of God*, 2 *Chron.* 14. And the three children, who had no particular promise of deliverance, that we read of, looked to God's ability to preserve them against the king's threatening, and owned it in the face of the king, yet with some kind of inward intimations in their own spirits that he *would* deliver them; *Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace. Dan.* 3. 17. And accordingly the fire burnt the cords that tied them, without singeing any thing else about them. But when this power hath been exercised upon like ocasions, it is a precedent he hath given us to rest upon. Precedents in law are good pleas, and strong encouragements to the client to expect success in his suit. *Our fathers trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them,* saith David, *Psal.* 22. 4. And Jehoshaphat

in a case of distress. *Art not thou our God, that didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel?* 2 *Chron.* 20. 7. When we have not any statute law and promise to plead, we may plead his power, together with the former precedents and acts of it. The centurion had nothing else to act his faith upon, but the power of Christ, and some evidences of it in the miracles reported of him; but he is silent in the latter, and cast himself only upon the former, acknowledging that Christ had the same command over diseases, as himself had over his soldiers, *Matt.* 8. 10. And our Saviour when he receives the petition of the blind men, requires no more of them in order to their cure, but a belief of his ability to perform it; *Believe you that I am able to do this? Matt.* 9. 28. His will is not known but by revelation, but his power is apprehended by reason, as essentially and eternally linked with the notion of a God. God also is jealous of the honour of this attribute; and since it is so much virtually discredited, he is pleased when any cordially own it and entirely resign themselves to the assistance of it.

Well then in all duties where faith is particularly to be acted, forget not this as the main support of it. Do you pray for a flourishing and triumphing grace? Consider him *as able to make all grace abound in you*, 2 *Cor.* 9. 8. Do you want comfort and reviving under your contritions, and godly sorrow? Consider him as he declares himself, *the high and lofty one, Isa.* 57. 15. Are you under pressing distresses; take the advice of Eliphaz to Job, when he tells him what he himself would do if he were in his case; *I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause. Job* 5. 8. But observe under what considerations, as to one that *doth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number*, ver. 9. When you beg of him the melting your rocky hearts, the subjugation of your strong corruptions, the drawing his beautiful image in your soul, the quickening your dead hearts, and reviving your drooping spirits, and supplying your spiritual wants, consider him as one *able to do abundantly*, not only *above what you can ask*, but *above what you can think*,

Eph. 3. 20. Faith will be spiritless and prayer will be lifeless, if the power of God be not eyed by us in those things which cannot be done without an arm of omnipotence.

3. This doctrine teaches us *humility* and *submission*, the vast disproportion between the mightiness of God, and the meanness of a creature, inculcates the lesson of humility in his presence: how becoming is humility *under a mighty hand*? 1 *Pet.* 5. 6. What is an infant in a giant's hand, or a lamb in a lion's paw? Submission to irresistible power is the best policy, and the best security: this gratifies and draws out goodness, whereas murmuring and resistance exasperates and sharpens power. We sanctify his name, and glorify his strength by falling down before it; it is an acknowledgment of his invincible strength, and our inability to match it. How low should we therefore lie before him, against whose power our pride and murmuring can do no good, who can out-wrestle us in our contests, and always *overcome when he judges*? *Rom.* 3. 4.

4. This doctrine teaches us, not to *fear* the pride and force of man. How unreasonable is it, to fear a limited above an unbounded power? How unbecoming is the fear of man in him, who hath an interest in a strength able to curb the strongest powers of hell? Who would tremble at the threats of a dwarf, that hath a mighty and watchful giant for his guard? If God but *arise, his enemies are scattered, Psal.* 68. 1, the least motion makes them fly before him; it is no difficult thing for him, that made them by a word, to unmake their designs, and shiver them in pieces by the breath of his mouth; *He brings princes to nothing, and makes the judges of the earth vanity; they wither when he blows upon them, and their stock shall not take root in the earth. He can command a whirlwind to take them away as stubble, Isa.* 40. 23, 24, yea with the shaking of his hand, he makes servants to become rulers of those that were their masters, *Zach.* 2. 9. Whole nations are no more in his hands than a morning cloud, or the dew upon the ground, or the chaff before the wind, or the

smoke against the motion of the air, which though it appear like a black invincible cloud, is quickly dispersed, and becomes invisible, *Hos.* 13. 3. How inconsiderable are the most mighty to this strength, which can puff away a whole world of proud grasshoppers, and a whole sky of daring clouds? He that by his word masters the rage of the sea, can over-rule the pride and power of men. Where is the fury of the oppressor? it cannot over-leap the bounds he hath set it, nor march an inch beyond the point he hath prescribed it. Fear not the confederacies of man, but *sanctify the Lord of hosts, let him be your fear, and let him be your dread, Isa.* 8. 13. To fear men is to dishonour the name of God, and regard him as a feeble Lord, and not as the Lord of hosts, who is mighty in strength, so that they that *harden themselves against him shall not prosper.*

5. Therefore this doctrine teacheth us the *fear of God.* The prophet Jeremiah counts it as an impossible thing for men to be destitute of the fear of God when they seriously consider his name to be great and mighty. *Thou art great, and thy name is great in might; who would not fear thee, O thou king of nations? Jer.* 10. 6, 7. Shall we not tremble at his presence, who hath placed the *sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree;* that though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet they cannot prevail, *Jer.* 5. 22. He can arm the weakest creature for our destruction, and disarm the strongest creatures which appear for our preservation. He can command a hair, a crumb, a kernel to strangle us. He can make the heavens brass over our head, stop the bottles of the clouds, and make the fruit of the fields droop, when there is a small distance to the harvest; he can arm men's wit, wealth, and hands against themselves: he can turn our sweet morsels into bitter, and our own consciences into devouring lions: he can root up cities by moles, and conquer the proudest by the meanest insects. The omnipotence of God is not only the object of a believer's trust, but a believer's fear. It is from the consideration of this power only, that our Saviour presses his disciples, whom he intitles his *friends,* to fear God; which lesson he presses by a double repeti-

tion, and with a kind of asseveration, without rendering any other reason, than this of the ability of God *to cast into hell*, *Luke* 12. 5. We are to fear him because he can, but bless his goodness because he will not. In regard of his omnipotence, he is to be reverenced, not only by mortal men, but by the blessed angels, who are past the fear of any danger by his power, being confirmed in a happy state by his unalterable grace; when they adore him for his holiness, they reverence him for his power with covered faces; the title of the *Lord of hosts* is joined in their reverential praise with that of his holiness, *holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts*, *Isa.* 6. 3. How should we adore that power which can preserve us, when devils and men conspire to destroy us? How should we stand in awe of that power which can destroy us, though angels and men should combine to preserve us? The parts of his ways which are discovered, are sufficient motives to an humble and reverential adoration; but who can fear and adore him according to the vastness of his power, and his excellent greatness, since *the thunder of his power who can understand?*

THE

HOLINESS OF GOD.

Exodus 15. 11.

WHO IS LIKE UNTO THEE, O LORD, AMONG THE GODS? WHO IS LIKE THEE, GLORIOUS IN HOLINESS, FEARFUL IN PRAISES, DOING WONDERS.

PART I.

HOLINESS A GLORIOUS PERFECTION OF THE DIVINE NATURE.

Interpretation of the text—Holiness of God acknowledged by all—Excellence of it above other perfections—The glory of them—Nature of his holiness—Negative and positive holiness—Essential—Absolute—God only absolutely holy—Abhorrence of sin—His love of holiness—No evil from, or with him.

THIS verse is one of the loftiest descriptions of the majesty and excellency of God in the whole scripture.* It is a part of Moses's Επινίκιον, or triumphant song, after a great and real, and a typical victory; in which all the deliverances of the church were couched. It is the first song upon holy record, and it consists of gratulatory and prophetic matter; it looks backward to what

* Trap. in loc.

God did for them in their deliverance from Egypt; and forward to what God shall do for the church in future ages. That deliverance was but a rough draught of something more excellent to be wrought towards the closing up of the world; when his plagues shall be poured out upon the antichristian powers, which should revive the same song of Moses in the church; as fitted so many ages before for such a scene of affairs, *Rev.* 15. 2, 3. It is observed therefore, that many words in this song are put in the future tense, noting a time to come; and the very first word, *Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song*, ver. 1; ושור *shall sing*; implying, that it was composed and calculated for the celebrating some greater action of God's, which was to be wrought in the world.* Upon this account some of the Jewish rabbins, from the consideration of this remark, asserted the doctrine of the resurrection to be meant in this place; that Moses and those Israelites should rise again to sing the same song, for some greater miracles God should work, and greater triumphs he should bring forth, exceeding those wonders at their deliverance from Egypt.

† It consists of, 1. A Preface, ver. 1, *I will sing unto the Lord*,

2. An historical narration of matter of fact, ver. 3, 4. *Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the Red sea;* which he solely ascribes to God, ver. 6, *Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy;* which he does prophetically, as respecting something to be done in after times; or further, for the completing of that deliverance, or as others think, respecting their entering into Canaan; for the words in these two verses are put in the future tense. The manner of the deliverance is described, ver. 8, *The floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.* In the 9th verse, he magnifies the victory from the vain glory

* Manass. ben. Israel, de Resur. lib. 1. cap. 1. p. 7.
† Pareus.

and security of the enemy; *the enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil*, &c. And ver. 16, 17, he prophetically describes the fruit of this victory, in the influence it shall have upon those nations, by whose confines they were to travel to the promised land; *Fear and dread shall fall upon them: by the greatness of thy arm they shall be as still as a stone, till thy people pass over which thou hast purchased.* The phrase of this, and the 17th and 18th verses, seems to be more magnificent, than to design only the bringing the Israelites to the earthly Canaan; but seems to respect the gathering his redeemed ones together, to place them in the spiritual sanctuary which he had established, wherein the Lord should reign for ever and ever, without any enemies to disturb his royalty; *the Lord shall reign for ever and ever*, ver. 18. The prophet, in the midst of his historical narrative, seems to be in ecstacy, and breaks out in a stately exaltation of God in the text.

Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods, &c. Interrogations are in scripture the strongest affirmations or negations: it is here a strong affirmation of the incomparableness of God, and a strong denial of the worthiness of all creatures to be partners with him in the degrees of his excellency: it is a preference of God before all creatures in holiness, to which the purity of creatures is but a shadow; in desert of reverence and veneration, he being *fearful in praises.* The angels cover their faces when they adore him in his particular perfections.

Amongst the gods. Amongst the idols of the nations, say some; others say* it is not to be found that the heathen idols are ever dignified with the title of *strong* and *mighty*, as the word translated gods, imports; and therefore understand it of the angels, or other potentates of the world; or rather inclusively, of all that are noted for, and can lay claim to the title of strength and might upon the earth or in heaven. God is so great and majestic, that no creature can share with him in his praise.

Fearful in praises. Various are the interpretations of this passage: to be reverenced in praises; his praise

* Rivet.

ought to be celebrated with a religious fear. Fear is the product of his mercy as well as his justice; he hath *forgiveness that he may be feared, Psal.* 130. 4, or *fearful in praises;* whom none can praise without amazement at the considerations of his works.* None can truly praise without being affected with astonishment at his greatness. Or, *fearful in praises:* † whom no mortal can sufficiently praise, since he is above all praise. Whatsoever a human tongue can speak, or an angelical understanding, think of the excellency of his nature and the greatness of his works, falls short of the vastness of the divine perfection. A creature's praises of God are as much below the transcendent eminency of God as the meanness of a creature's being is below the eternal fulness of the Creator. Or rather, *fearful,* or terrible, *in praises;* that is, in the matter of thy praise; and the learned Rivet concurs with me in this sense. The works of God celebrated in this song were terrible: it was the miraculous overthrow of the strength and flower of a mighty nation: his judgments were severe, as well as his mercy was seasonable. The word נורא signifies *glorious* and *illustrious,* as well as *terrible* and *fearful.* No man can hear the praise of thy name, for those great judicial acts, without some astonishment at thy justice, the stream, and thy holiness, the spring, of those mighty works. This seems to be the sense of the following words, *doing wonders;* fearful in the matter of thy praise, they being wonders which thou hast done among us and for us.

Doing wonders. Congealing the waters by a wind, to make them stand like walls for the rescue of the Israelites; and melting them by a wind, for the overthrow of the Egyptians, are prodigies that challenge the greatest adorations of that mercy which delivered the one, and that justice which punished the other; and of the arm of that power whereby he effected both his gracious and his righteous purposes. From whence observe, that the *judgments* of God upon his enemies, as well as his *mercies* to his people, are *matter of praise.* The perfections of

* Calvin. † Munster.

God appear in both. Justice and mercy are so linked together in his acts of providence, that the one cannot be forgotten whilst the other is acknowledged. He is never so terrible as in the *assemblies of his saints*, and the deliverance of them, *Psal.* 89. 7. As the creation was erected by him for his glory; so all the acts of his government are designed for the same end; and his creatures deny him his due, if they acknowledge not his excellency in whatsoever dreadful, as well as pleasing garbs, it appears in the world. His terror as well as his righteousness appears when he is a God of salvation; *Psal.* 65. 5, *By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation.*

But the expression I fix upon in the text to handle, is *glorious in holiness.* He is *magnified* or *honourable* in holiness; so the word נאדר is translated, *Isa.* 42. 21. *He will magnify the law and make it honourable.* Thy holiness hath shone forth admirably in this last exploit, against the enemies and oppressors of thy people. The holiness of God is his glory, as his grace is his riches; holiness is his crown, and his mercy is his treasure. This is the blessedness and nobleness of his nature; it renders him glorious in himself, and glorious to his creatures, that understand any thing of this lovely perfection.

Doctrine. Holiness is a glorious perfection belonging to *the nature of God.* Hence he is in scripture styled often the *Holy One*, the *Holy One of Jacob*, the *Holy One of Israel;* and oftener entitled Holy, than Almighty, and set forth by this part of his dignity more than by any other. This is more affixed as an epithet to his name; than any other: you never find it expressed His mighty name, or His wise name; but his Great name, and most of all, his *Holy name.* This is his greatest title of honour, in this does the majesty and venerableness of his name appear. When the sinfulness of Sennacherib is aggravated, the Holy Ghost takes the rise from this attribute; *Thou hast lift up thine eyes on high, even against the Holy One of Israel;* 2 *Kings* 19. 22. not against the wise, mighty, &c. but against the *Holy One of Israel*, as that wherein the majesty of God was most illustrious. It is upon this account he is called light, as impurity is called

darkness; both in this sense are opposed to one another: he is a pure and unmixed light, free from all blemish in his essence, nature, and operations.

1. *Heathens* have owned it. Proclus calls him, the "undefiled governor of the world."* The poetical transformations of their false gods, and the extravagancies committed by them, was in the account of the wisest of them, an unholy thing to report and hear.† ‡And some vindicate Epicurus from the atheism wherewith he was commonly charged; that he did not deny the Being of God, but those adulterous and contentious deities the people worshipped, which were practices unworthy and unbecoming the nature of God. Hence they asserted, that virtue was an imitation of God, and a virtuous man bore a resemblance to God; if virtue were a copy from God, a greater holiness must be owned in the original. And when some of them were at a loss, how to free God from being the author of sin in the world, they ascribe the birth of sin to matter, and run into an absurd opinion, fancying it to be uncreated, that thereby they might exempt God from all mixture of evil; so sacred with them was the conception of God, as a holy God.

2. The absurdest *heretics* have owned it. §The Manichees and Marchionites, that thought evil came by necessity, yet would solve God's being the author of it, by asserting two distinct eternal principles, one the original of evil, as God was the fountain of good; so rooted was the notion of this divine purity, that none would ever slander goodness itself with that which was so disparaging to it,

3. The nature of God cannot rationally be *conceived without it.* Though the power of God be the first rational conclusion, drawn from the sight of his works; wisdom the next, from the order and connection of his works; purity must result from the beauty of his works; that God cannot be deformed by evil, who hath made

*Αχθαντος ἡγμών.

† Ὀυδ' ἀκέειν ὅσιον. Ammon. in Plut, de Ἐι apud Delphos, p. 393.

‡ Gassend. Tom. 1. Phys. 1. lib. 4.; ap. 2. p. 289.

§ Petav. Theol. Dogmat. Tom. 1. lib. 6. cap. 5. p. 415.

every thing so beautiful in its time. The notion of a God cannot be entertained without separating from him whatsoever is impure and defiling both in his essence and actions. Though we conceive him infinite in majesty, infinite in essence, eternal in duration, mighty in power, and wise and immutable in his counsels; merciful in his proceedings with men, and whatsoever other perfections may dignify so sovereign a being; yet if we conceive him destitute of this excellent perfection, and imagine him possessed with the least contagion of evil, we make him but an infinite monster, and sully all those perfections we ascribed to him before; we rather own him a devil than a God. It is a contradiction to be God and to be darkness, or to have one mote of darkness mixed with his light. It is a less injury to him to deny his being than to deny the purity of it; the one makes him no God, the other a deformed, unlovely, and a detestable God. Plutarch said not amiss, that he should count himself less injured by that man that should deny that there was such a man as Plutarch, than by him that should affirm that there was such a one indeed, but he was a debauched fellow, a loose and vicious person. It is a less wrong to God to discard any acknowledgments of his being, and to count him nothing, than to believe him to exist, but imagine him a base and unholy Deity. He that saith God is not holy, speaks much worse than he that saith, *there is no God* at all.

Let two things be considered here,

I. If any, this attribute hath an excellency *above* his other perfections. There are some attributes of God we prefer, because of our interest in them, and the relation they bear to us. As we esteem his goodness before his power; and his mercy, whereby he relieves us, before his justice, whereby he punisheth us. As there are some we more delight in, because of the goodness we receive by them; so there are some that God delights to honour, because of their excellency.

1. No attribute is sounded out so *loftily*, with such *solemnity*, and so *frequently* by angels that stand before his throne, as this. Where do you find any other attribute

trebled in the praises of it, as this? *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory, Isa.* 6. 3; and *the four beasts rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty*, &c. *Rev.* 4. 8. His power of sovereignty, as Lord of hosts, is but once mentioned, but with a ternal repetition of his holiness. Do you hear in any angelical song any other perfection of the divine nature thrice repeated? Where do we read of the crying out eternal, eternal, eternal; or faithful, faithful, faithful, Lord God of hosts? Whatsoever other attribute is left out, this God would have to fill the mouths of angels and blessed spirits for ever in heaven.

2. He singles it out to *swear* by. *Once I have sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David, Psal.* 89. 35; and *the Lord will swear by his holiness, Amos* 4. 2. He twice swears by his holiness; once by his power, *Isa.* 62. 8; once by all when he swears by his name, *Jer.* 44. 26. He lays here his holiness to pledge for the assurance of his promise, as the attribute most dear to him, most valued by him, as though no other could give an assurance parallel to it in this concern of an everlasting redemption which is there spoken of. He that swears, swears by a greater than himself; God having no greater than himself, swears by himself: and swearing here by his holiness, seems to equal that single one to all his other attributes; as if he were more concerned in the honour of it, than of all the rest. It is as if he should have said, Since I have not a more excellent perfection to swear by than that of my holiness, I lay this to answer for your security, and bind myself by that which I will never part with, were it possible for me to be stripped of all the rest. It is a tacit imprecation of himself, If I lie unto David, let me never be counted holy, or thought righteous enough to be trusted by angels or men.

3. It is his *glory* and *beauty*. Holiness is the honour of the creature, *sanctification and honour* are linked together, 1 *Thess.* 4. 4, much more is it the honour of God; it is the image of God in the creature, *Ephes.* 4. 24. When we take the picture of a man, we draw the most beautiful part, the face, which is a member of the greatest

excellency. When God would be drawn to the life, as much as can be, in the spirit of his creatures, he is drawn in this attribute, as being the most beautiful perfection of God, and most valuable with him. Power is his hand and arm, omniscience his eye; mercy his heart, eternity his duration; his holiness is his beauty; *should praise the beauty of holiness*, 2 *Chron.* 20. 21. In the 27th *Psal.* and 4th verse, David desires *to behold the beauty of the Lord, and enquire in his holy temple;* that is, the holiness of God manifested in his hatred of sin in the daily sacrifices. Holiness was the beauty of the temple. *Holy and beautiful house* are joined together, *Isa.* 46. 11; much more the beauty of God that dwelt in the sanctuary. This renders him lovely to all his innocent creatures, though formidable to the guilty ones. * A heathen philosopher could call it "the beauty of the divine essence," and say, that "God was not so happy by an eternity of life, as by an excellency of virtue." And the angels' song intimates it to be his glory, *The whole earth is full of thy glory*, *Isa.* 6. 3; that is, of his holiness in his laws, and in his judgments against sin; that being the attribute applauded by them before.

4. It is his very *life*. So it is called, *Alienated from the life of God*, *Ephes.* 4. 18; that is, from the *holiness* of God; speaking of the opposite to it, the uncleanness and profaneness of the Gentiles. We are only alienated from that which we are bound to imitate; but this is the perfection always set out as the pattern of our actions, *Be you holy, as I am holy;* no other is proposed as our copy. Alienated from that purity of God, which is as much as his life, without which he could not live. If he were stripped of this, he would be a dead God more than by the want of any other perfection. His swearing by it intimates as much. He swears often by his own life, *As I live, saith the Lord;* so he swears by his holiness, as if it were his life, and more his life than any other. Let me not live, or let me not be holy, are all one in his oath. His deity could not out-live the life of his purity.

II. As it seems to challenge an excellency above all

* Plutarch. Eugubin. de perenni Phil. lib. 6. cap. 6.

his other perfections, so it is *the glory of all the rest.* As it is the glory of the godhead, so it is the glory of every perfection in the godhead. As his power is the strength of them, so his holiness is the beauty of them. As all would be weak without omnipotence to back them, so all would be uncomely without holiness to adorn them. Should this be sullied, all the rest would lose their honour and their comfortable efficacy. As at the the same instant that the sun should lose its light, it would lose its heat, its strength, its generative and quickening virtue; as sincerity is the lustre of every grace in a Christian, so is purity the splendour of every attribute in the godhead. His justice is a holy justice; his wisdom a holy wisdom; his arm of power a *holy arm, Psal.* 98. 1; his truth or promise a *holy promise, Psal.* 105. 43. *Holy* and *true* go hand in hand, *Revel.* 6. 10. His *name,* which signifies all his attributes in conjunction, *is holy, Psal.* 103. 1. Yea, *he is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, Psal.* 145. 17. It is the rule of all his acts, the source of all his punishments. If every attribute of the Deity were a distinct member, purity would be the form, the soul, the spirit to animate them. Without it, his patience would be an indulgence to sin, his mercy a fondness, his wrath a madness, his power a tyranny, his wisdom an unworthy subtlety. It is this gives decorum to all. His mercy is not exercised without it, since he pardons none but those that have an interest, by union in the obedience of a Mediator, which was so delightful to his infinite purity. His justice, which guilty man is apt to tax with cruelty and violence in the exercise of it, is not acted out of the compass of this rule. In acts of man's vindictive justice there is something of impurity, perturbation, passion, some mixture of cruelty; but none of these fall upon God in the severest acts of wrath. When God appears to Ezekiel in the resemblance of fire, to signify his anger against the house of Judah for their idolatry, *from his loins downward* there was the *appearance of fire;* but *from the loins upward, the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber, Ezek.* 8. 2. His heart is clear in his most terrible acts of vengeance,

it is a pure flame wherewith he scorcheth and burns his enemies. He is holy in the most fiery appearance.

This attribute therefore is never so much applauded, as when his sword has been drawn, and he hath manifested the greatest fierceness against his enemies. The magnificent and triumphant expression of it in the text, follows just upon God's miraculous defeat and ruin of the Egyptian army, *The sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters:* then it follows, *Who is like unto thee, O Lord, glorious in holiness?* And when it was so celebrated by the seraphims, *Isa.* 6. 3. It was when the *posts moved,* and *the house was filled with smoke,* ver. 4; which are signs of anger, *Psal.* 18. 7, 8. And when he was about to send Isaiah upon a message of spiritual and temporal judgments, that he would *make the heart of that people fat, and their ears heavy, and their eyes shut; waste their cities without inhabitants, and their houses without man, and make the land desolate,* ver. 9, 10, 11, 12, and the angels which here applaud him for his holiness, are the executioners of his justice; and here called seraphims, from burning, or fiery spirits, as being the ministers of his wrath. His justice is part of his holiness, whereby he reduces into order those things that are out of order. When he is consuming men by his fury, he does not diminish, but manifest purity; *The just Lord is in the midst of her, he will do no iniquity, Zeph.* 3. 5. Every action of his is free from all tincture of evil. It is also celebrated with praise by the four beasts about his throne, when he appears in a covenant garb, with a *rainbow about his throne,* and yet with *thunderings* and *lightnings* shot out against his enemies, *Rev.* 4. 8, compared with ver. 3, 5, to shew, that all his acts of mercy as well as justice, are clear from any stain.—This is the crown of all his attributes, the life of all his decrees, the brightness of all his actions: nothing is decreed by him, nothing is acted by him but what is worthy of the dignity, and becoming the honour of this attribute.

For the better understanding this attribute, observe,—1. The *nature* of this holiness. 2. The *demonstration*

of it. 3. The *purity* of his nature in all his acts about sin. 4. The use of all to ourselves.

First, The *nature* of divine holiness.

In *general.* The holiness of God *negatively*, is a perfect freedom from *all* evil. As we call gold pure that is not embased by any dross, and that garment clean that is free from any spot; so the nature of God is estranged from all shadow of evil, all imaginable contagion. *Positively*, it is the rectitude or integrity of the divine nature, or that conformity of it in affection and action to the divine will, as to his eternal law, whereby he works with a due regard to his own excellency, and whereby he hath a delight and complacency in every thing agreeable to his will, and an abhorrence of every thing contrary thereunto.

As there is no darkness in his understanding, so there is no spot in his will: as his mind is possessed with all truth, so there is no deviation in his will from it. He loves all truth and goodness; he hates all falsity and evil. In regard of his righteousness, he loves righteousness; *Psa.* 11. 7. *The righteous Lord loveth righteousness; and hath no pleasure in wickedness, Psa.* 5. 4. He values purity in his creatures, and detests all impurity, whether inward or outward.* We may indeed distinguish the holiness of God from his righteousness in our conceptions: holiness is a perfection absolutely considered in the nature of God; righteousness, a perfection as referred to others in his actions towards them and upon them.

In *particular.* This property of the divine nature is,

1. An *essential* and *necessary* perfection: he is essentially and necessarily holy. It is the essential glory of his nature: his holiness is necessary as his being; as necessary as his omniscience: as he cannot but know what is right, so he cannot but do what is just. His understanding is not as created understandings, capable of ignorance as well as knowledge; so his will is not as created

* Martin de Deo, p. 86.

wills, capable of unrighteousness, as well as righteousness. There can be no contradiction or contrariety in the divine nature, to know what is right, and do what is wrong: if so, there would be a diminution of his blessedness, he would not be a God always blessed, *blessed for ever*, *Rom.* 9. 5, as he is. He is as necessarily holy, as he is necessarily God; as necessarily without sin, as without change. As he was God from eternity, so he was holy from eternity. * He was gracious, merciful, just in his own nature, and also holy; though no creature had been framed by him to exercise his grace, mercy, justice, or holiness upon. If God had not created a world, he had in his own nature been almighty, and able to create a world. If there never had been any thing but himself, yet he had been omniscient, knowing every thing that was within the verge and compass of his infinite power; so he was pure in his own nature, though he never had brought forth any rational creature whereby to manifest this purity. These perfections are so necessary, that the nature of God could not subsist without them. And the acts of those *ad intra*, or within himself, are necessary; for being omniscient in nature, there must be an act of knowledge of himself and his own nature. Being infinitely holy, an act of holiness in infinitely loving himself, must necessarily flow from this perfection †. As the divine will cannot but be perfect; so it cannot be wanting to render the highest love to itself, to its goodness, to the divine nature, which is due to him. Indeed, the acts of those *ad extra* are not necessary, but upon a condition. To love righteousness without himself, or to detest sin, or inflict punishment for the committing of it, could not have been, had there been no righteous creature for him to love, no sinning creature for him to loathe, and to exercise his justice upon as the object of punishment.

Some attributes require a condition to make the acts of them necessary. As it is at God's liberty, whether he will create a rational creature, or no: but when he de-

* Turretin. de Satisfact. p. 28.

† Ochino, Predict. part 3. Bodic. 51. p. 347, 348.

crees to make either angel or man, it is necessary from the perfection of his nature to make them righteous. It is at God's liberty whether he will speak to man, or no; but if he does, it is impossible for him to speak that which is false, because of his infinite perfection of veracity. It is at his liberty whether he will permit a creature to sin; but if he sees good to suffer it, it is impossible but that he should detest that creature that goes cross to his righteous nature. His holiness is not solely an act of his will, for then he might be unholy as well as holy; he might love iniquity and hate righteousness; he might then command that which is good, and afterwards command that which is bad and unworthy: for what is only an act of his will, and not belonging to his nature, is indifferent to him. As the positive law he gave to Adam, of not eating the forbidden fruit, was a pure act of his will; he might have given him liberty to eat of it, if he had pleased, as well as prohibited him. But what is moral and good in its own nature, is necessarily willed by God, and cannot be changed by him, because of the transcendent eminency of his nature, and righteousness of his will. As it is impossible for God to command his creature to hate him, or to dispense with a creature for not loving him; for this would be to command a thing intrinsically evil, the highest ingratitude, the very spirit of all wickedness, which consists in the hating God. Yet though God be thus necessarily holy, he is not so by a bare and simple necessity, as the sun shines, or the fire burns; but by a free necessity, not compelled thereunto, but inclined from the fulness of the perfection of his own nature and will; so as by no means he can be unholy, because he will not be unholy; it is against his nature to be so.

2. God is only *absolutely* holy. *There is none holy as the Lord,* 1 *Sam.* 2. 2. It is the peculiar glory of his nature. As there is none good but God, so none holy but God. No creature can be essentially holy, because mutable: holiness is the substance of God; but a quality and accident in a creature. God is infinitely holy, creatures finitely holy. He is holy from himself, creatures

are holy by derivation from him. He is not only holy, but holiness; holiness in the highest degree, is the sole prerogative. As the highest heaven is called the *heaven of heavens*, because it embraceth in its circle all the heavens, and contains the magnitude of them, and hath a greater vastness above all that it incloseth; so is God the *Holy of holies*, he contains the holiness of all creatures put together, and infinitely more. As all the wisdom, excellency, and power of the creatures, if compared with the wisdom, excellency, and power of God, is but folly, vileness, and weakness; so the highest created purity, if set in parallel with God, is but impurity and uncleanness; *thou only art holy*, *Rev.* 15. 4: it is like the light of a glow-worm to that of the sun: *the heavens are not pure in his sight, and his angels he charges with folly*, *Job* 15. 15. and 4. 18. Though God hath crowned the angels with an unspotted sanctity, and placed them in a habitation of glory; yet as illustrious as they are, they have an unworthiness in their own nature to appear before the throne of so holy a God; their holiness grows dim and pale in his presence. It is but a weak shadow of that divine purity, whose light is so glorious, that it makes them *cover their faces* out of weakness to behold it, and cover their feet out of shame in themselves. They are not *pure in his sight*, because though they love God, which is a principle of holiness, as much as they can, yet not so much as he deserves: they love him with the intensest degree, according to their power; but not with the intensest degree, according to his own amiableness: for they cannot infinitely love God, unless they were as infinite as God, and had an understanding of his perfections equal with himself, and as immense as his own knowledge. God having an infinite knowledge of himself, can only have an infinite love to himself, and consequently an infinite holiness without any defect; because he loves himself according to the vastness of his own amiableness, which no finite being can. Therefore, though the angels be exempt from corruption and soil, they cannot enter into comparison with the purity of God, without acknowledgment of a dimness in themselves. Besides, *he charges*

them with folly, and *puts no trust* in them; because they have the power of sinning, though not the act of sinning: they have a possible folly in their own nature to be charged with. Holiness is a quality separable from them, but it is inseparable from God. Had they not at first a mutability in their nature, none of them could have sinned, there had been no devils; but because some of them sinned, the rest might have sinned: and though the standing angels shall never be changed, yet they are still changeable in their own nature, and their standing is due to grace, not to nature; and though they shall be for ever preserved, yet they are not, nor ever can be immutable by nature, for then they should stand upon the same bottom with God himself; but they are supported by grace against that changeableness of nature which is essential to a creature: the Creator *only hath immortality*, that is, immutability, 1 *Tim.* 3. 15,

It is as certain a truth, that no creature can be naturally immutable and impeccable, as that God cannot create any thing actually polluted and imperfect. It is as possible that the highest creature may sin, as it is possible that it may be annihilated: it may become not holy, as it may become not a creature, but nothing. The holiness of a creature may be reduced into nothing, as well as his substance: but the holiness of the Creator cannot be diminished, dimmed, or overshadowed; *he is the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning, James* 1. 17. It is as impossible his holiness should be blotted, as that his Deity should be extinguished: for whatsoever creature hath essentially such or such qualities, cannot be stripped of them, without being turned out of its essence. As a man is essentially rational; and if he ceases to be rational, he ceases to be man. The sun is essentially luminous; if it should become dark in its own body, it would cease to be the sun. In regard of this absolute and only holiness of God, it is thrice repeated by the seraphims, *Isa.* 6. 3. The threefold repetition of a word, notes the certainty or absoluteness of the thing, or the irreversibleness of the resolve; as *I will overturn, overturn, overturn, Ezek.*

21. 27. notes the certainty of the judgment; also *Woe, woe, woe, Rev.* 8. 8, three times repeated, signifies the same. The holiness of God is so absolutely peculiar to him, that it can no more be expressed in creatures, than his omnipotence, whereby they may be able to create a world; or his omniscience, whereby they may be capable of knowing all things, and knowing God as he knows himself.

3. God is so holy, that he cannot possibly *approve* of any evil done by another, but doth perfectly abhor it; it would not else be a glorious holiness; *He hath no pleasure in wickedness, Psal.* 5. 3. He not only loves that which is just, but abhors with a perfect hatred all things contrary to the rule of righteousness. Holiness can no more approve of sin than it can commit it: to be delighted with the evil in another's act, contracts guilt, as well as the commission of it; for approbation of a thing is a consent to it: sometimes the approbation of an evil in another, is a more grievous crime than the act itself, as appears in *Rom.* 1. 32, *Who knowing the judgment of God, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do it:* Where the *not only* manifests it to be a greater guilt to take pleasure in them. Every sin is aggravated by delight in it; to take pleasure in the evil of another's action, shews a more ardent affection and love to sin, than the committer himself may have. This therefore can as little fall upon God, as to do an evil act himself; yet as a man may be delighted with the consequences of another's sin, as it may occasion some public good, or private good to the guilty person; as sometimes it may be an occasion of his repentance, when the horridness of a fact stares him in the face, and occasions a self-reflection for that and other crimes, which is attended with an indignation against them, and sincere remorse for them; so God is pleased with those good things his goodness and wisdom bring forth upon the occasion of sin. But in regard of his holiness, he cannot approve of the evil, whence his infinite wisdom drew forth his own glory and his creature's good; his pleasure is not in the sinful act of the creature, but in the act of his own goodness and skill, turning it to another end than what the creature aimed at.

He abhors sin *necessarily*. Holiness is the glory of the Deity, therefore necessary. The nature of God is so holy, that he cannot but hate it. *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: Hab.* 1. 13. He is more opposite to it, than light to darkness, and therefore it can expect no countenance from him: a love of holiness cannot be without a hatred of every thing that is contrary to it: as God necessarily loves himself, so he must necessarily hate every thing that is against himself: and as he loves himself for his own excellency and holiness, he must necessarily detest whatsoever is repugnant to his holiness, because of the evil of it: since he is infinitely good, he cannot but love goodness, as it is a resemblance to himself, and cannot but abhor unrighteousness, as being most distant from him, and contrary to him. If he have any esteem for his own perfections, he must needs have an implacable aversion to all that is so repugnant to him, that would, if it were possible, destroy him, and is a point directed not only against his glory, but against his life. If he did not hate it, he would hate himself: for since his righteousness is his image, and sin would deface his image; if he did not love his image, and loathe what is against his image, he would loathe himself, he would be an enemy to his own nature:* Nay, if it were possible for him to love it, it were possible for him not to be holy, it were possible then for him to deny himself, and will that he were no God, which is a palpable contradiction. Yet this necessity in God of hating sin, is not a brutish necessity, such as is in mere animals, that avoid by a natural instinct, not of choice, what is prejudicial to them; but most free, as well as necessary, arising from an infinite knowledge of his own nature, and of the evil nature of sin, and the contrariety of it to his own excellency, and the order of his works.

Therefore he abhors sin *intensely*. Nothing do men act for more than their glory. As he infinitely, and therefore perfectly, knows himself, so he infinitely, and therefore perfectly, knows what is contrary to himself,

* Turretin de Satisfact p. 35, 36.

and, as according to the manner and measure of his knowledge of himself, is his love to himself, as infinite as his knowledge, and therefore inexpressible and inconceivable by us: so from the perfection of his knowledge of the evil of sin, which is infinitely above what any creature can have, arises a displeasure against it suitable to that knowledge. In creatures the degrees of affection to, or aversion from a thing, are suited to the strength of their apprehensions of the good or evil in them. God knows not only the workers of wickedness, but the wickedness of their works, for *he knows vain men, he sees wickedness also*, *Job* 11. 11. The vehemency of this hatred is expressed variously in scripture; he loathes it so, that he is impatient of beholding it; the very sight of it affects him with detestation, *Hab.* 1. 13; he hates the first spark of it in the *imagination*, *Zach.* 8. 17. With what variety of expressions does he repeat his indignation at their polluted services; *I hate, I detest, I despise, I will not smell, I will not accept, I will not regard; take away from me the noise of thy songs, I will not hear*, *Amos* 5. 21, 22. *My soul hates, they are a trouble to me, I am weary to bear them*, *Isa.* 1. 14. It is the *abominable thing* that he *hates*, *Jer.* 44. 4. he is *vexed* at it, *Isa.* 63. 10. *Ezek.* 16. 43. He abhors it so, that his hatred redounds upon the person that commits it, he *hates all workers of iniquity*, *Psalm* 5. 5. Sin is the only primary object of his displeasure: he is not displeased with the nature of man as man, for that was derived from him; but with the nature of man as sinful, which is from the sinner himself. When a man hath but one object for the exercise of all his anger, it is stronger than when diverted to many objects: a mighty torrent, when diverted into many streams, is weaker than when it comes in a full body upon one place only. The infinite anger and hatred of God, which is as infinite as his love and mercy, has no other object, against which he directs the mighty force of it, but only unrighteousness. He hates no person for all the penal evils upon him, though they were more by ten thousand times than Job was struck with, but only for his sin. Again, sin being only evil, and an unmixed evil,

there is nothing in it that can abate the detestation of God, or balance his hatred of it; there is not the least grain of goodness in it, to incline him to the least affection to any part of it. This hatred cannot but be intense; for as the more any creature is sanctified, the more is he advanced in the abhorrence of that which is contrary to holiness; therefore God being the highest, most absolute, and infinite holiness, doth infinitely, and therefore intensely, hate unholiness; being infinitely righteous, he infinitely abhors unrighteousness; being infinitely true, he infinitely abhors falsity, and it is the greatest and most deformed evil. As it is from the righteousness of his nature, that he hath satisfaction in righteousness: *The righteous Lord loveth righteousness*, *Psal.* 11. 7. So it is from the same righteousness of his nature, that he detests whatsoever is morally evil: as his nature therefore is infinite, so must his abhorrence be.

Because he abhors sin necessarily and intensely, he abhors it *universally*. He does not hate it in one, and indulge it in another, but loathes it wherever he finds it; not one worker of iniquity is exempt from it: *Thou hatest all workers of iniquity*, *Psal.* 5. 5. For it is not sin, as in this or that person, or as great or little; but sin, as sin, is the object of his hatred: and therefore let the person be never so great, and have particular characters of his image upon him, it secures him not from God's hatred of any evil action he shall commit. He is a jealous God, jealous of his glory; a metaphor taken from jealous husbands, who will not endure the least adultery in their wives, nor God the least defection of man from his law, *Exod.* 20. 5. Every act of sin is a spiritual adultery, denying God to be the chief good, and giving that prerogative by that act to some vile thing. He loves it no more in his own people than he doth in his enemies; he frees them not from his rod, the testimony of his loathing their crimes; whosoever sows iniquity, shall reap affliction. It might be thought that he affected their dross, if he did not refine them, and loved their impurity, if he did not cleanse them; because of his detestation of their sin, he will not spare them from the furnace, though

because of love to their persons in Christ, he will exempt them from hell. How often did the sword come upon David's family after his unworthy dealing in Uriah's case, and cut off some of the branches of it? He sometimes punishes sin more severely in this life in his own people, than in others: upon Jonah's disobedience a storm pursues him, and a whale devours him, while the profane world lived in their lusts without controul. Moses, for one act of unbelief, is excluded from Canaan, when greater sinners attained that happiness. It is not a light punishment, but a vengeance he takes on their inventions, to manifest that he hates sin as sin, and not because the worst commit it, *Psal.* 99. 8. Perhaps, had a profane man touched the ark, the hand of God had not so suddenly reached him: but when Uzzah, a man zealous for him, as may be supposed by his care for the support of the tottering ark, would step out of his place, he strikes him down for his disobedient action, by the side of the ark, which he would indirectly, as not being a *Levite*, sustain, 2 *Sam.* 6. 7. Nor did our Saviour so sharply reprove the Pharisees, and turn so short from them as he did from Peter, when he gave a carnal advice, and contrary to that wherein was to be the greatest manifestation of God's holiness, viz. the death of Christ, *Matt.* 16. 23. He calls him Satan, a name sharper than the title of the devil's children, wherewith he marked the Pharisees, and given, besides him, to none but Judas, who made a profession of love to him, and was outwardly ranked in the number of his disciples. A gardener dislikes a weed the more, for being in the bed with the most precious flowers. God's hatred is universally fixed against sin, and he hates it as much in those whose persons shall not fall under his eternal anger, as being secured in the arms of a Redeemer, by whom the guilt is wiped off, and the uncleanness shall be totally washed away: though he hates their sin, and cannot but hate it, yet he loves their persons, as being united as members to the Mediator and mystical head. A man may love a gangrened member, because it is a member of his own body, or a member of a dear relation,

but he loathes the gangrene in it more than in those wherein he is not so much concerned.

Though God's hatred of believers' persons is removed by faith in the satisfactory death of Jesus Christ; yet his antipathy against sin was not taken away by that blood; nay it was impossible it should: it was never designed, nor had it any capacity to alter the unchangeable nature of God, but to manifest the purity of his will, and his eternal aversion to any thing that was contrary to the purity of his being, and the righteousness of his laws.

God abhors sin *perpetually:* this must necessarily follow. He can no more cease to hate impurity, than he can cease to love holiness: if he should in the least instant approve of any thing that is impure, in that moment he would disapprove of his own nature and being; there would be an interruption in his love of himself, which is as eternal as it is infinite. How can he love any sin, which is contrary to his nature, but for one moment without hating his own nature, which is essentially contrary to sin? Two contraries cannot be loved at the same time; God must first begin to hate himself, before he can approve of any evil which is directly opposite to himself. We indeed are changed with a temptation; sometimes we bear an affection to it, and sometimes testify an indignation against it; but God is always the same without any shadow of change, and *is angry with the wicked every day, Psa.* 7. 11, that is, uninterruptedly in the nature of his anger, though not in the effects of it. God indeed may be reconciled to the sinner, but never to the sin; for then he should renounce himself, deny his own essence and his own divinity, if his inclinations to the love of goodness, and his aversion from evil, could be changed; if he suffered the contempt of the one, and encouraged the practice of the other.

4. God is so holy, that he cannot but *love holiness in others.* Not that he owes any thing to his creatures, but from the unspeakable holiness of his nature, whence affections to all things that bear a resemblance of him do flow; as light shoots out from the sun, or any glittering body:

It is essential to the infinite righteousness of his nature, to love righteousness wherever he beholds it: *The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, Psal.* 11. 7. He cannot, because of his nature, but love that which bears some agreement with his nature, that which is the curious draught of his own wisdom and purity: he cannot but be delighted with a copy of himself; he would not have a holy nature, if he did not love holiness in every nature: his own nature would be denied by him, if he did not affect every thing that had a stamp of his own nature upon it. There was indeed nothing without God, that could invite him to manifest such goodness to man, as he did in creation: but after he had stamped that rational nature with righteousness convenient for it, it was impossible but that he should ardently love that impression of himself, because he loves his own Deity, and consequently all things which are any sparks and images of it: and were devils capable of an act of righteousness, the holiness of his nature would incline him to love it, even in those dark and revolted spirits.

5. God is so holy, that he cannot positively will or *encourage sin in any.* How can he give any encouragement to that, which he cannot in the least approve of, or look upon without loathing, not only the crime but the criminal? Light may sooner be the cause of darkness, than holiness itself be the cause of unholiness, absolutely contrary to it: it is a contradiction, that he that is the fountain of good, should be the source of evil; as if the same fountain should send forth both sweet and bitter streams, *James* 3. 11. Since whatsoever good is in man, acknowledges God for its author, it follows that men are evil by their own fault. There is no need for men to be incited to that, to which the corruption of their own nature so powerfully bends them. Water has a forcible principle in its own nature to carry it downward; it needs no force to hasten the motion: God *tempts no man, but every man is drawn away by his own lust, James* 1. 13, 14. All the preparations for glory are from God, *Rom.* 9. 23. But men are said to be *fitted* to *destruction*, ver. 22, but God is not said to fit them; they by their iniquities fit

themselves for ruin, and he by his long-suffering keeps the destruction from them for a while.

God cannot *command* any unrighteousness. As all virtue is summed up in love to God; so all iniquity is summed up in enmity to God. Every wicked work declares a man an enemy to God; *Enemies in your minds by wicked works, Col.* 1. 21. If he could command his creature any thing which bears an enmity in its nature to himself, he would then implicitly command the hatred of himself, and he would be in some measure a hater of himself. He that commands another to deprive him of his life, cannot be said to bear any love to his own life. God can never hate himself, and therefore cannot command any thing that is hateful to him, and tends to a hating of him, and driving the creature further from him. In that very moment that God should command such a thing, he would cease to be good. What can be more absurd to imagine, than that infinite goodness should enjoin a thing contrary to itself, and contrary to the essential duty of a creature, and order him to do any thing that bespeaks an enmity to the nature of the Creator, or a deflowering and disparaging of his works? God cannot but love himself, and his own goodness, he were not otherwise good; and therefore cannot order the creature to do any thing opposite to his goodness, or any thing hurtful to the creature itself, as unrighteousness is.

Nor can God *secretly inspire* any evil into us. It is as much against his nature to incline the heart to sin as it is to command it. As it is impossible but that he should love himself, and therefore impossible to enjoin any thing that tends to a hatred of himself; by the same reason it is as impossible that he should infuse such a principle in the heart that might carry a man out to any act of enmity against him. To enjoin one thing, and incline to another, would be an argument of such insincerity, unfaithfulness, and contradiction to itself, that it cannot be conceived to fall within the compass of the divine nature, who is *a God without iniquity*, because *a God of truth* and sincerity, *just and right is he, Deut.* 32. 4. To bestow excellent faculties upon man in creation, and

incline him by a sudden impulsion to things contrary to his true end, and induce an inevitable ruin upon that work which he had composed with so much wisdom and goodness, and pronounced good with so much delight and pleasure, is inconsistent with that love which God bears to the creature of his own framing. To incline his will to that which would render him the object of his hatred, the fuel for his justice, and sink him into deplorable misery, it is most absurd and unchristian-like to imagine.

Nor can God *necessitate man to sin.* Indeed sin cannot be committed by force; there is no sin but is in some sort voluntary. Voluntary in the root, or voluntary in the branch; voluntary by an immediate act of the will, or voluntary by a general or natural inclination of the will. That is not a crime to which a man is forced, without any concurrence of the faculties of the soul to that act; it is indeed not an act but a passion; a man that is forced is not an agent, but a patient under the force. But what necessity can there be upon man from God, since he hath implanted such a principle in him, that he cannot desire any thing but what is good, either really or apparently; and if a man mistakes the object, it is his own fault; for God hath endowed him with reason to discern, and liberty of will to choose upon that judgment.

And though it is to be acknowledged that God hath an absolute sovereign dominion over his creature, without any limitation, and may do what he pleases, and dispose of it according to his own will, as a *potter doth with his vessel, Rom.* 9. 21; according as the church speaks, *We are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand, Isa.* 64. 8. Yet he cannot pollute any undefiled creature by virtue of that sovereign power, which he hath to do what he will with; because such an act would be contrary to the foundation and right of his dominion, which consists in the excellency of his nature, his immense wisdom, and unspotted purity. If God should therefore do any such act, he would expunge the right of his dominion, by blotting out that nature which

renders him fit for that dominion, and the exercise of it.* Any dominion which is exercised without the rules of goodness is not true sovereignty, but an insupportable tyranny. God would cease to be a rightful sovereign if he ceased to be good; and he would cease to be good if he commanded, necessitated, or by any positive operation inclined inwardly the heart of a creature directly to that which was morally evil, and contrary to the eminency of his own nature.

But that we may the better conceive of this, let us trace man in his first fall, whereby he subjected himself, and all his posterity, to the curse of the law and hatred of God, we shall find no footsteps either of precept, outward force, or inward impulsion.† The plain story of man's apostacy discharges God from any interest in the crime as an encouragement, and excuses him from any appearance of suspicion, when he shewed him the tree he had reserved as a mark of his sovereignty, and forbid him to eat of the fruit of it. He enforced the prohibition with the threatening the greatest evil, viz. *death;* which could be understood to imply nothing less than the loss of all his happiness; and in that was couched an assurance of the perpetuity of his felicity, if he did not rebelliously reach forth his hand to take and *eat of the fruit, Gen. 2. 16, 17.* It is true God had given that fruit an excellency, *a goodness for food, and pleasantness to the eye, Gen. 3. 6.* He had given man an appetite, whereby he was capable of desiring so pleasant a fruit; but God had by creation ranged it under the command of reason, if man would have kept it in its due obedience; he had fixed a severe threatening to bar the unlawful excursions of it. He had allowed him a multitude of other fruits in the garden, and given him liberty enough to satisfy his curiosity in all except this only.

Could there be any thing more obliging to man, to let God have his reserve of that one tree, than the grant of all the rest; and more deterring from any disobedient at-

* Amyrald. disert. p. 103, 104.

† Amyrald. defens. de Calvin. p. 151, 152.

tempt than so strict a command, spirited with so dreadful a penalty? God did not solicit him to rebel against him. A solicitation to it, and a command against it, were inconsistent. Satan assaults him, and God permitted it, and stands as it were a spectator of the combat. There could be no necessity upon man to listen to, and entertain the suggestions of the serpent: he had power to resist him, and he had an answer ready for all his arguments, had they been multiplied to more than they were; the opposing the order of God had been a sufficient confutation of all Satan's plausible reasonings. That Creator who hath given me my being, hath ordered me not to eat of it. Though the pleasure of the fruit might allure him, yet the force of his reason might have quelled the desires of his sense. The perpetual thinking of, and sounding out, the command of God, had silenced both Satan and his own appetite; had disarmed the tempter, and preserved his sensitive part in its due subjection.

What inclination can we suppose there could be from the Creator, when upon the very first offer of the temptation, Eve opposes to the tempter the prohibition and threatening of God, and strains it to a higher pitch than we find God had delivered it? For in *Gen. 2. 17*, it is, you *shall not eat of it;* but she adds, *neither shall you touch it, Gen. 3. 3*, which was a remark that might have had more influence to restrain her. Had our first parents kept this fixed upon their understandings and thoughts, that God had forbidden any such act as the eating of the fruit, and that he was true to execute the threatening he had utterred, of which truth of God they could not but have a natural notion, with what ease they might have withstood the devil's attack, and defeated his design? And it had been easy with them, to have kept their understandings by the force of such a thought, from entertaining any contrary imagination. There is no ground for any jealousy of any encouragements, inward impulsions, or necessity from God in this affair. A discharge of God from this first sin, will easily induce a freedom of him from all other sins which follow upon it.

God does not then encourage, or excite, or incline to

sin. How can he excite to that which, when it is done, he will be sure to condemn? How can he be a righteous judge to sentence a sinner to misery for a crime acted by a secret inspiration from himself? Iniquity would deserve no reproof from him, if he were any way positively the author of it. Were God the author of it in us, what is the reason our own consciences accuse us for it, and convince us of it? That, being God's deputy, would not accuse us of it, if the sovereign power by which it acts inclined us to it. How can he be thought to excite to that which he has enacted such severe laws to restrain, or incline man to that which he hath so dreadfully punished in his Son, and which it is impossible but the excellency of his nature must incline him eternally to hate? We may sooner imagine that a pure flame shall engender cold, and darkness to be the offspring of a sun-beam, as imagine such a thing as this. *What shall we say? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.* The apostle execrates such a thought, *Rom.* 9. 14.

6. God cannot act any evil *in or by himself.* If he cannot approve of sin in others, nor excite any to iniquity, which is less, he cannot commit evil himself, which is greater. What he cannot positively will in another, can never be willed in himself; he cannot do evil through ignorance, because of his infinite knowledge; nor through weakness, because of his infinite power; nor through malice, because of his infinite rectitude. He cannot will any unjust thing, because, having an infinitely perfect understanding, he cannot judge that to be true which is false; or that to be good which is evil: his will is regulated by his wisdom. If he could will any unjust and irrational thing, his will would be repugnant to his understanding; there would be a disagreement in God, will against mind, and will against wisdom. He being the highest reason, the first truth, cannot do an unreasonable, false, defective action. It is not a defect in God that he cannot do evil, but a fulness and excellency of power. As it is not a weakness in the light, but a perfection of it, that it is unable to produce darkness; God is *the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, James* 1. 17. Nothing

pleases him, nothing is acted by him, but what is becoming the infinite excellency of his own nature. The voluntary necessity whereby God cannot be unjust, renders him a *God blessed for ever*. He would hate himself as the chief good, if in any of his actions he should disagree with his goodness. He cannot do any unworthy thing, not because he wants an infinite power, but because he is possessed of an infinite wisdom, and adorned with an infinite purity; and being infinitely pure, cannot have the least mixture of impurity. As if you can suppose fire infinitely hot, you cannot suppose it to have the least mixture of coldness. The better any thing is, the more unable it is to do evil. God being the only goodness, can as little be changed in his goodness, as in his essence.

PART II.

DEMONSTRATION OF THE DIVINE HOLINESS.

Proved from Creation.—Argued from his laws.—The moral law.—Ceremonial law.—Promises and threatenings.—Judgments inflicted.—The whole work of redemption.

THE SECOND thing, which demands our attention is,

The *proof* that God is holy, or the manifestation of it. Purity is as requisite to the blessedness of God, as to the being of God: as he could not be God without being blessed, so he could not be blessed without being holy. He is called by the title of blessed, as well as by that of holy. *Art thou the Christ, the Son of the blessed?* *Mark* 14. 61.

Unrighteousness is a misery and turbulency in any spirit wherein it is: for it is a privation of an excellency which ought to be in every intellectual being, and what can follow upon the privation of an excellency but unquietness and grief, the moth of happiness? An unrighteous man, as an unrighteous man, can never be blessed, though he were in a local heaven. Had God the least spot upon his purity, it would render him as miserable in the midst of his infinite sufficiency, as iniquity renders a man in the confluence of his earthly enjoyments. The holiness and felicity of God are inseparable in him. The apostle intimates, that the heathen made an attempt to sully his blessedness, when they would liken him to corruptible, mutable, impure man; *They changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man*, *Rom.* 1. 23, 25: and after he entitles God, a God blessed for ever. The gospel is therefore called, *the glorious gospel of the blessed God*, 1 *Tim.* 1. 11. In regard of the holiness of the gospel precepts, and in regard of the declaration of the holiness of God in all the streams and branches wherein his purity, in which his blessedness consists, is as illustrious as any other perfection of the divine being. God hath highly manifested this attribute in the state of nature; in the legal administration; in the dispensation of the gospel. His wisdom, goodness, and power, are declared in creation; his sovereign authority in his law; his grace and mercy in the gospel; and his righteousness in all. Suitable to this threefold state, may be that ternal repetition of his holiness in the prophecy, *Isa.* 6. 3, holy as Creator and Benefactor; holy as Law-giver and Judge; holy as Restorer and Redeemer.

I. His holiness appears as he is *Creator*, in framing man in a perfect uprightness. Angels, as made by God, could not be evil; for God beheld his own works with pleasure, and could not have pronounced them all good, had some been created pure, and others impure: two moral contrarieties could not be good. The angels had a *first estate*, *Jude* 6, wherein they were happy; and had they not left their own habitation and state, they

could not have been miserable. But because the scripture speaks only of the creation of man, we will consider, that the human nature was well strung and tuned by God, according to the note of his own holiness: *God hath made man upright, Eccles.* 7. 29: he had declared his power in other creatures, but would declare in his rational creature, what he most valued in himself; and therefore created him upright, with a wisdom which is the rectitude of the mind, with a purity which is the rectitude of the will and affections. He had declared a purity in other creatures, as much as they were capable of, viz. in the exact tuning them to answer one another. And that God, who so well tuned and composed other creatures, would not make man a jarring instrument, and place an imperfect creature to be lord of the rest of his earthly fabric.

God being holy, could not set his seal upon any rational creature, but the impression would be like himself, pure and holy also: he could not be created with an error in his understanding: that had been inconsistent with the goodness of God to his rational creature: if so, the erroneous motion of the will, which was to follow the dictates of the understanding, could not have been imputed to him as his crime, because it would have been, not a voluntary, but a necessary effect of his nature; had there been an error in the first wheel, the error of the next could not have been imputed to the nature of that, but to the irregular motion of the first wheel in the engine. The sin of men and angels proceeded not from any natural defect in their understandings, but from inconsideration: he that was the author of harmony in his other creatures, could not be the author of disorder in the chief of his works: other creatures were his footsteps, but man was his image. *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, Gen.* 1. 26, 27. Which though it seems to imply no more in that place, than an image of his dominion over the creatures, yet the apostle raises it a step higher, and gives us a larger interpretation of it, *And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him, Col.* 3. 10; making it to consist in a resemblance to his righteousness. *Image*, say some, notes the form, as man

was a spirit in regard of the soul; *likeness* notes the quality implanted in his spiritual natnre.

The image of God was drawn in him, both as he was a rational, and as he was a holy creature. The creatures manifested the being of a superior power, as their cause, but the righteousness of the first man evidenced, not only a sovereign power, as the donor of his being; but a holy power, as the pattern of his work: God appeared to be a holy God in the righteousness of his creature, as well as an understanding God in the reason of his creature, while he formed him with all necessary knowledge in his mind, and all necessary uprightness in his will: the law of love to God, with his whole soul, his whole mind, his whole heart and strength, was originally writ upon his nature: all the parts of his nature were framed in a moral conformity with God, to answer this law, and imitate God in his purity, which consists in a love of himself, and his own goodness and excellency. Thus doth the clearness of the stream point us to the purer fountain, and the brightness of the beam evidence a greater splendour in the sun which is emitted from it.

II. His holiness appears *in his laws*, as he is a lawgiver and a judge. Since man was bound to be subject to God, as a creature, and had a capacity to be ruled by the law, as an understanding and willing creature, God gave him a law taken from the depths of his holy nature, and suited to the original faculties of man. The rules which God hath fixed in the world, are not the resolves of bare will, but result particularly from the goodness of his nature; they are nothing else but the transcripts of his infinite detestation of sin, as he is the unblemished Governor of the world. This being the most adorable property of his nature, he hath impressed it upon that law which he would have inviolably observed as a perpetual rule for our actions, that we may every moment think of this beautiful perfection. God can command nothing, but what hath some similitude with the rectitude of his own nature; all his laws, every paragraph of them, therefore, savour of this, and glitter with it. *What nation hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law*

I set before you this day? *Deut.* 4. 8; and therefore they are compared to *fine gold*, that hath no speck or dross, *Psal.* 19. 10.

This purity is evident, 1. In the moral law, or law of nature. 2. In the ceremonial law. 3. In the allurements annexed to it for keeping it, and the affrightments to refrain from the breaking of it. 4. In the judgments inflicted for the violation of it.

1. In the *moral* law: Which is therefore dignified with the title of holy, twice in one verse, *Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, just, and good*, *Rom.* 7. 12; it being the express image of God's will, as our Saviour was of his person, and bearing a resemblance to the purity of his nature. The tables of this law were put into the ark, that as the mercy-seat was to represent the grace of God, so the law was to represent the holiness of God, *Psal.* 19. 1. The psalmist, after he had spoken of the glory of God in the heavens, wherein the power of God is exposed to our view, introduceth the law, wherein the purity of God is evidenced to our minds; *perfect*, *pure*, *clean*, *righteous*, *Psal.* 19 7, &c, are the titles given to it. It is clearer in holiness, than the sun is in brightness; and more mighty in itself to command the conscience, than the sun is to run its race. As the holiness of the scripture demonstrates the divinity of its author; so does the holiness of the law the purity of the law-giver.

1. The purity of this law is seen in the *matter* of it. It prescribes all that becomes a creature towards God, and all that becomes one creature towards another of his own rank and kind. The image of God is complete in the holiness of the first table, and the righteousness of the second; which is intimated by the apostle, *Eph.* 4. 24; the one being the rule of what we owe to God; the other being the rule of what we owe to man; there is no good but it enjoins, and no evil but it disowns. It is not sickly and lame in any part of it; not a good action, but it gives it its due praise: and not an evil action, but it sets a condemning mark upon. The commands of it are frequently in scripture called judgments, because they

rightly judge of good and evil, and are a clear light to inform the judgment of man in the knowledge of both. By this was the understanding of David enlightened to know every *false* way, and to *hate* it, *Psal.* 119. 104. There is no case can happen, but may meet with a determination from it; it teaches men the noblest manner of living, a life like God himself; honourably for the law-giver, and joyfully for the subject. It directs us to the highest end; sets us at a distance from all base and sordid practices; it proposes light to the understanding, and goodness to the will. It would tune all the strings, set right all the orders of mankind: it censures the least mote, countenanceth not any stain in the life. Not a wanton glance can meet with any justification from it, *Matt.* 5. 28; not a rash anger, but it frowns upon, *Matt.* 5, 22.

As the law-giver wants nothing as an addition to his blessedness; so his law wants nothing as a supplement to its perfection, *Deut.* 4. 2. What our Saviour seems to add, is not an addition to mend any defects; but a restoration of it from the corrupt glosses, wherewith the Scribes and Pharisees had eclipsed the brightness of it: they had curtailed it, and diminished part of its authority, cutting off its empire over the least evil, and left its power only to check the grosser practices. But Christ restores it to the due extent of its sovereignty, and shews it in those dimensions in which the holy men of God considered it, as *exceeding broad*, *Psal.* 119. 96, reaching to all actions, all motions, and all circumstances attending them; full of inexhaustible treasures of righteousness. And though this law, since the fall, irritates sin, it is no disparagement, but a testimony to the righteousness of it; which the apostle manifests by his, *Wherefore, sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence*, *Rom.* 7. 8; and repeating the same sense, ver. 11. subjoins a wherefore; *Wherefore the law is holy*, ver. 12. The rising of men's sinful hearts against the law of God, when it strikes with its preceptive and minatory parts upon their consciences, evidenceth the holiness of the law and the law-giver. In

its own nature it is a directing rule, but the malignant nature of sin is exasperated by it: as an hostile quality in a creature will awaken itself at the appearance of its enemy. The purity of this beam, and transcript of God, bears witness to a greater clearness and beauty in the sun and original. Undefiled streams manifest an untainted fountain.

2. It is seen in the *manner* of its precepts. As it prescribes all good, and forbids all evil; so it enjoins the one, and banishes the other as such. The laws of men command virtuous things; not as virtuous in themselves, but as useful for human society; of which the magistrate is the conservator, and the guardian justice.* The laws of men contain not all the precepts of virtue, but only such as are accommodated to their customs, and are useful to preserve the ligaments of their government. The design of them is not so much to render the subjects good men, as good citizens; they order the practice of those virtues that may strengthen civil society, and discountenance those vices only which weakens the sinews of it; but God, being the *guardian* of universal righteousness, does not only enact the observance of *all righteousness*, but the observance of it *as righteousness*. He commands that which is just in itself; enjoins virtues as virtues, and prohibits vices as vices; as they are profitable or injurious to ourselves, as well as to others. Men command temperance and justice; not as virtues in themselves, but as they prevent disorder and confusion in a common-wealth; and forbid adultery and theft; not as vices in themselves, but as they are intrenchments upon property; not as hurtful to the person that commits them, but as hurtful to the person against whose right they are committed. Upon this account perhaps Paul applauds the holiness of the law of God in regard of its own nature, as considered in itself, more than the justice of it in regard of man, and the goodness and conveniency of it to the world; the law is *holy* twice, and *just and good* but once, *Rom.* 7. 12.

* Ames de Consc. lib. 5. cap. 1. quest. 7.

3. In the *spiritual extent* of it. The most righteous powers of the world, do not so much regard in their laws what the inward affections of their subjects are; the external acts are only the objects of their decrees, either to encourage them if they be useful, or discourage them if they be hurtful to the community. And indeed they can do no other, for they have no power proportioned to inward affections, since the inward disposition falls not under their censure; and it would be foolish for any legislative power to make such laws, which it is impossible for it to put in execution. They can prohibit the outward acts of theft and murder, but they cannot command the love of God, the hatred of sin, the contempt of the world; they cannot prohibit unclean thoughts, and the atheism of the heart. But the law of God surmounts in righteousness all the laws of the best regulated common-wealths in the world; it restrains the licentious heart, as well as the violent hand; it damps the very first bubblings of corrupt nature, orders purity in the spring; commands a clean fountain, clean streams, clean vessels. It would frame the heart to an inward, as well as the life to an outward righteousness, and make the inside purer than the outside. It forbids the first operations of a murderous or adulterous intention; it obliges man as a rational creature, and therefore exacts a conformity of every rational faculty, and of whatsoever is under the command of them. It commands the private closet to be free from the least cobweb, as well as the outward porch to be clean from mire and dirt. It frowns upon all stains and pollutions of the most retired thoughts; hence the apostle calls it, a *spiritual law*, *Rom.* 7. 14, as not political, but extending its force further than the frontiers of the man; placing its ensigns in the metropolis of the heart and mind, and curbing with its sceptre the inward motions of the Spirit, and commanding over the secrets of every man's breast.

4. In regard of the *perpetuity* of it. The purity and perpetuity of it are linked together by the psalmist; *The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever*, *Psal.* 19. 9; the fear of the Lord, that is, that law which commands

the fear and worship of God, and is the rule of it. And indeed, God values it at such a rate, that rather than part with a tittle, or let the honour of it lie in the dust, he would not only let *heaven and earth pass away*, but expose his Son to death for the reparation of the wrong it had sustained. So holy it is, that the holiness and righteousness of God cannot dispense with it, cannot abrogate it, without despoiling himself of his own being; it is a copy of the eternal law. Can he ever abrogate the command of love to himself, without shewing some contempt of his own excellency and very being? Before he can enjoin a creature not to love him, he must make himself unworthy of love, and worthy of hatred; this would be the highest unrighteousness, to order us to hate that which is only worthy of our highest affections. * So God cannot change the first command, and order us to worship many gods; this would be against the excellency and unity of God: for God cannot constitute another God, or make any thing worthy of an honour equal with himself. Those things that are good, only because they are commanded, are alterable by God: those things that are intrinsically and essentially good, and therefore commanded, are unalterable as long as the holiness and righteousness of God stand firm. The intrinsic goodness of the moral law, the concern God hath for it; the perpetuity of the precepts of the first table, and the care he hath had to imprint the precepts of the second upon the minds and consciences of men, as the author of nature for the preservation of the world; manifests the holiness of the Law-maker and Governor.

2. His holiness appears in the *ceremonial law.* In the variety of sacrifices for sin, wherein he wrote his detestation of unrighteousness in bloody characters. His holiness was more constantly expressed in the continual sacrifices, than in those rarer sprinklings of judgments now and then upon the world; which often reached not the worst, but the most moderate sinners, and were the occasions of the questioning of the righteousness of his

* Suarez.

providence both by Jews and Gentiles. In judgments his purity was only now and then manifest: by his long patience, he might be imagined by some reconciled to their crimes, or not much concerned in them; but by the morning and evening sacrifice he witnessed a perpetual and uninterrupted abhorrence of whatsoever was evil. Besides these, the occasional washings and sprinklings upon the ceremonial defilements, which polluted only body, gave evidence, that every thing that had a resemblance to evil, was loathsome to him. Add also the prohibitions of eating such and such creatures that were filthy; as the swine that wallowed in the mire, a fit emblem for the profane and brutish sinner; which had a moral signification, both of the loathsomeness of sin to God, and the aversion themselves ought to have to every thing that was filthy.

3. His holiness appears in the *allurements* annexed to the law for *keeping* it; and the affrightment to restrain from the breaking of it. Both promises and threatenings have their fundamental root in the holiness of God, and are both branches of this peculiar perfection. As they respect the nature of God they are declarations of his hatred of sin, and his love of righteousness; the one belong to his threatenings, the other to his promises; both join together to represent this divine perfection to the creature, and to excite to an imitation in the creature. In the one God would render sin odious, because dangerous; and curb the practice of evil, which would otherwise be licentious: in the other, he would commend righteousness, and excite a love of it, which would otherwise be cold. By these God suits the two great affections of men, fear and hope; both the branches of self-love in man: the promises and threatenings are both the branches of holiness in God. The end of the promises, is the same with the exhortation the apostle concludes from them, *Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*, 2 *Cor.* 7. 1. As the end of precepts, is to direct; the end of threatenings, is to deter from iniquity; so that of the promises, is to allure to

obedience. Thus God breathes out his love to righteousness in every promise, his hatred of sin in every threatening. The rewards offered in the one, are the smiles of pleased holiness; and the curses thundered in the other, are the sparklings of enraged righteousness.

4. His holiness appears in the *judgments* inflicted for the violation of this law. Divine holiness is the root of divine justice, and divine justice is the triumph of divine holiness. Hence both are expressed in scripture by one word of righteousness, which sometimes signifies the rectitude of the divine nature, and sometimes the vindicative stroke of his arm; *The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed, Psa.* 106. 3. So *Dan.* 9. 7. Righteousness (that is, justice) belongs to thee. The vials of his wrath are filled from his implacable aversion to iniquity. All penal evils showered down upon the heads of wicked men, spread their root in, and branch out from, this perfection. All the dreadful storms and tempests in the world are blown up by it. Why does he *rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and a horrible tempest?* because *the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, Psa.* 11. 6, 7. And, as was observed before, when he was going about the most dreadful work that ever was in the world; the overturning the Jewish state, hardening the hearts of that unbelieving people, and cashiering a nation, once dear to him, from the honour of his protection; his holiness, as the spring of all this, is applauded by the seraphims, *Isa.* 6. 3, compared with ver. 9. 10, 11, &c. Impunity argues the approbation of a crime, and punishment the abhorrence of it. The greatness of the crime, and the righteousness of the judge, are the first natural sentiments that arise in the minds of men upon the appearance of divine judgments in the world, by those that are near them *. As when men see gibbets erected, scaffolds prepared, instruments of death and torture provided, and grievous punishments inflicted; the first reflection in the spectators, is the malignity of the crime, and the detestation the governors are possessed with.

* Amirant. Moral. tom. 5. p. 388.

1. How severely *hath he punished* his most noble creatures for sin? The once glorious angels, upon whom he had been at greater cost than upon other creatures, and drawn more lively lineaments of his own excellency, upon the transgression of his law, are thrown into the furnace of justice without any mercy to pity them, *Jude* 6. And though there were but one sort of creatures upon the earth that bore his image, and were only fit to publish and keep up his honour below the heavens; yet upon their apostacy (though upon a temptation from a subtle and insinuating spirit) the man, with all his posterity, is sentenced to misery in life, and death at last; and the woman, with all her sex, have standing punishments inflicted on them; which as they begun in their persons, were to reach as far as the last member of their successive generations. So holy is God, that he will not endure a spot in his choicest work. Men indeed, when there is a defect in an excellent piece of work, or a stain upon a rich garment, do not cast it away; they value it for the remaining excellency, more than hate it for the contracted spot: but God saw no excellence in his creature worthy regarding, after the image of that which he most esteemed in himself was defaced.

2. How detestable to him are the very *instruments* of sin? For the ill use, the serpent, an irrational creature, was put to by the devil, as an instrument in the fall of man, the whole brood of those animals are cursed, *Cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field, Gen.* 3. 14. Not only the devil's head is threatened to be for ever bruised, and, as some think, rendered irrecoverable upon this further testimony of his malice in the seduction of man; who perhaps without this new act, might have been admitted into the arms of mercy, notwithstanding his first sin; * but, he is not only punished, but the organ whereby he blew in his temptation, is put into a worse condition than it was before. Thus God hated the instrument

* Yet though the scripture gives us no account of this, this is the only sentence we read of pronounced against Satan, which puts him into an irrecoverable state by a mortal bruising of his head.

whereby Satan deformed his beautiful image; and thus God, to manifest his detestation of sin, ordered the beast whereby any man was slain, to be slain as well as the malefactor, *Levit.* 20. 15. The gold and silver that had been abused to idolatry, and were the ornaments of images; though good in themselves, and incapable of a criminal nature, were not to be brought into their houses, but detested and abhorred by them, because they were cursed, and an *abomination to the Lord.* See with what loathing expressions this law is enjoined upon them, *Deut.* 7. 25, 26. So contrary is the holy nature of God to every sin, that it curseth every thing that is instrumental in it.

3. How detestable is *every thing to him, that is in the sinner's possession?* The very earth, of which God had made Adam the proprietor, was *cursed for his sake, Gen.* 3. 17, 18. It lost its beauty, and lies languishing to this day; and, notwithstanding the redemption by Christ, hath not recovered its health, nor is it like to do, till the completing the fruits of it upon the *children of God, Rom.* 8. 20, 21, 22. The whole lower creation was made *subject to vanity,* and put into pangs upon the sin of man, by the righteousness of God detesting his offence. How often hath his implacable aversion from sin been shewn, not only in his judgments upon the offenders' persons, but by including in the same judgment those which stood in a near relation to them? Achan, with his children and cattle, are overwhelmed with stones, and burned together, *Josh.* 7. 24, 25. In the destruction of Sodom, not only the grown malefactors, but the infants, incapable of the same wickedness, and their cattle, were burned by the same *fire from heaven;* and the place where their habitations stood, is at this day partly a heap of ashes, and partly an infectious lake, that chokes any fish that swim into it from Jordan, and stifles, as is related, by its vapour, any bird that attempts to fly over it. Oh, how detestable is sin to God, that causes him to turn a pleasant land, as the *garden of the Lord,* as it is styled, *Gen.* 13. 10, into a lake of sulphur; to make it both in his word and works, as a lasting monument of his abhorrence of evil!

4. What *design* hath God in all these acts of severity

and vindictive justice, but to set off the lustre of his holiness? He testifies himself concerned for those laws, which he hath set as hedges and limits to the lusts of men; and therefore when he breathes forth his fiery indignation against a people, he is said to get himself honour: as when he intended the Red Sea should swallow up the Egyptian army, *Exod.* 14. 17, 18. which Moses in his triumphant song echoes back again, *thou hast triumphed gloriously, Exod.* 15. 1; gloriously in his holiness, which is the glory of his nature; as Moses himself interprets it in the text. When men will not own the holiness of God in a way of duty, God will vindicate it in a way of justice and punishment. In the destruction of Aaron's sons, that were will-worshippers, and would take strange fire, sanctified and glorified are coupled, *Lev.* 10. 3. He glorified himself in that act, in vindicating his holiness before all the people, declaring, that he will not endure sin and disobedience. He therefore in this life more severely punishes the sins of his people when they presume upon any act of disobedience; for a testimony that the nearness and dearness of any person to him, shall not make him unconcerned in his holiness, or be a plea for impurity. The end of all his judgments is to witness to the world his abomination of sin. To punish and witness against men are one and the same thing; *The Lord shall witness against you, Micah,* 1. 2; and it is the witness of God's *holiness; And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face, Hos.* 5. 5. One renders it the *excellency of Israel,* and understands it of God; the word גאון which is here in our translation pride, is rendered excellency, *The Lord God hath sworn by his excellency, Amos* 8. 7; which is interpreted *holiness, The Lord God hath sworn by his holiness, Amos* 4. 2.

What is the issue or *end* of this swearing by holiness, and of his excellency testifying against them? In all those places you will find them to be sweeping judgments. In one, Israel and Ephraim shall *fall in their iniquity;* in another, he will *take them away with hooks,* and *their posterity with fish-hooks;* and in another, he would *never forget any of their works.* He that punishes wickedness

in those he before used with the greatest tenderness, furnishes the world with an undeniable evidence of the detestableness of it to him. Were not judgments sometimes poured out upon the world, it would be believed that God were rather an approver than an enemy to sin. To conclude, since God hath made a stricter law to guide men; annexed promises above the merit of obedience, to allure them; and threatenings dreadful enough to affright men from disobedience: he cannot be the cause of sin, nor a lover of it. How can he be the author of that which he so severely forbids; or love that which he delights to punish; or be fondly indulgent to any evil, when he hates the ignorant instruments in the offences of his reasonable creatures?

III. The holiness of God appears in our *restoration.* It is in the glass of the gospel we behold *the glory of the Lord,* 2 *Cor.* 3. 18; that is, the glory of the Lord, into whose image we are changed; but we are changed into nothing, as the image of God, but into holiness. We bore not upon us by creation, nor by regeneration, the image of any other perfection. We cannot be changed into his omnipotence, omniscience, &c. but into the image of his righteousness. This is the pleasing and glorious sight the gospel mirror darts in our eyes. The whole scene of redemption is nothing else but a discovery of judgment and righteousness; *Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness, Isa.* 1. 27.

1. This holiness of God appears in the *manner* of our restoration, viz. by the death of Christ. Not all the vials of judgments that have, or shall be, poured out upon the wicked world, nor the flaming furnace of a sinner's conscience, nor the irreversible sentence pronounced against the rebellious devils, nor the groans of the damned creatures, give such a demonstration of God's hatred of sin, as the wrath of God let loose upon his Son. Never did divine holiness appear more beautiful and lovely than at the time our Saviour's countenance was most marred in the midst of his dying groans. This himself acknowledges in that prophetical psalm, when

God had turned his smiling face from him, and thrust his sharp knife into his heart, which forced that terrible cry from him, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Psal.* 22. 1, 2: he adores this perfection of holiness: *But thou art holy,* ver. 3; thy holiness is the spring of all this sharp agony, and for this thou inhabitest, and shalt for ever inhabit, the praises of all thy Israel. Holiness drew the veil between God's countenance and our Saviour's soul. Justice indeed gave the stroke, but holiness ordered it. In this his purity did sparkle, and his irreversible justice manifested, that all those that commit sin *are worthy of death;* this was the perfect index of his righteousness, *Rom.* 3. 29, that is, of his holiness and truth; then it was that God that is holy, was *sanctified in righteousness, Isa.* 5. 16.

This will appear the more if you consider,

The dignity of the Redeemer's *person.* One that had been from eternity; had laid the *foundation of the world;* had been the object of the divine delight. He that was *God blessed for ever,* becomes a *curse:* he who was blessed by angels, and by whom God blessed the world, must be seized with horror: the Son of eternity must bleed to death. Where did ever sin appear so irreconcilable to God? Where did God ever break out so furiously in his detestation of iniquity? The Father would have the most excellent person, one next in order to himself, and *equal* to him in all the glorious perfections of his nature, die on a disgraceful cross, and be exposed to the flames of divine wrath, rather than sin should live, and his holiness remain for ever disparaged by the violations of his law.

Consider also the near *relation* he stood in to the *Father.* He was his *own Son* that he *delivered up, Rom.* 8. 32. His essential image, as dearly beloved by him as himself; yet he would abate nothing of his hatred of those sins imputed to one so dear to him, and who never had done any thing contrary to his will. The *strong cries* uttered by him, could not cause him to cut off the least fringe of this royal garment, nor part with a thread with which the robe of his holiness was woven. The torrent of wrath is opened upon him, and the Father's

heart beats not in the least notice of tenderness to sin, in the midst of his Son's agonies.* God seems to lay aside the heart of a father, and put on the garb of an irreconcileable enemy. Upon which account, probably, our Saviour in the midst of his passion gives him the title of *God;* not of *Father*, the title he usually before addressed him with; *My God, my God, Matth.* 27. 46; not, my Father, my Father, *why hast thou forsaken me?* He seems to hang upon the cross like a disinherited son, while he appeared in the garb and rank of a sinner. Then was his head loaded with curses, when he stood under that sentence of, *Cursed is every one that hangs upon a tree, Gal.* 3. 13, and looked as one forlorn and rejected by the divine purity and tenderness. God dealt not with him, as if he had been one in so near a relation to him. He left him not the will only of the instruments of his death, he would have the chiefest blow himself of bruising of him; *It pleased the Lord to bruise him; Isa.* 53. 10; the *Lord*, because the power of creatures could not strike a blow strong enough to satisfy and secure the rights of infinite holiness. It was therefore a cup tempered and put into his hands by his Father; a cup given him to drink. In other judgments he lets out his wrath against his creatures; in this he lets out his wrath, as it were, against himself, against his Son, one as dear to him as himself. As in his making creatures, his power over nothing to bring it into being appeared; but in pardoning sin he hath power over himself; so in punishing creatures, his holiness appears in his wrath against creatures, against sinners by inherency; but by punishing sin in his Son, his holiness sharpens his wrath against him who was his equal, and only a reputed sinner; as if his affection, his own holiness, surmounted his affection to his Son; for he chose to suspend the breakings out of his affections to his Son, and see him plunged in a sharp and ignominious misery, without giving him any visible token of his love; rather than see his holiness lie groaning under the injuries of a transgressing world.

* Lingend. Tom. 3. p. 669, 700.

The value he puts upon his holiness appears further in *the advancement* of this redeeming person *after his death.* Our Saviour was advanced not barely for his dying, but for the respect he had in his death to this attribute of God. *Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity: therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness,* &c. *Heb.* 1. 9. By *righteousness* is meant this perfection, because of the opposition of it to iniquity. Some think the term therefore to be the final cause; as if this were the sense, *thou art anointed with the oil of gladness, that thou mightest love righteousness and hate iniquity.* But the Holy Ghost seeming to speak in this chapter, not only of the Godhead of Christ, but of his exaltation; the doctrine whereof he had begun in ver. 3, and prosecutes in the following verses; I would rather understand *therefore, for this cause, or reason,* hath God anointed thee; not, *to this end.* Christ indeed had an unction of grace, whereby he was fitted for his mediatory work; he had also an unction of glory, whereby he was rewarded for it. In the first instance, it was a qualifying him for his office; in the second, it was his solemn inauguration to his royal authority. And the reason of his being settled upon a throne for ever and ever, is because he loved righteousness. He suffered himself to be pierced to death, that sin, the enemy of God's purity, might be destroyed; and the honour of the law, the image of God's holiness, might be repaired and fulfilled in the fallen creature. He restored the credit of divine holiness in the world, in manifesting by his death, that God was an irreconcileable enemy to all sin; in abolishing the empire of sin, so hateful to God, and restoring the rectitude of nature, and new framing the image of God in his chosen ones.

And God so valued this vindication of his holiness, that he confers upon him, in his human nature, an eternal royalty and empire over angels and men. Holiness was the great attribute respected by Christ in his dying, and manifested in his death; and for his love to this, God would bestow an honour upon his person, in that nature wherein he vindicated the honour of so dear a per-

fection. In the death of Christ, he shewed his resolution to preserve its rights. In the exaltation of Christ, he evidenced his mighty pleasure for the vindication of it. In both, the infinite value he had for it, as dear to him as his life and glory.

It may be further considered, that in this way of redemption, his holiness in the hatred of sin, seems to be valued *above any other attribute.* He proclaims the value of it above the person of his Son; since the divine nature of the Redeemer is disguised, obscured, and veiled, in order to the restoring the honour of it. And Christ seems to value it above his own person, since he submitted himself to the reproaches of men, to clear this perfection of the divine nature, and make it illustrious in the eyes of the world. You heard before, at the beginning of the handling this argument; it was the beauty of the deity, the lustre of his nature, the link of all his attributes, his very life; he values it equally with himself, since he swears by it, as well as by his life. And none of his attributes would have a due decorum without it: it is the glory of power, mercy, justice, wisdom, that they are all holy. So that though God had an infinite tenderness and compassion to the fallen creature, yet it should not extend itself in his relief to the prejudice of the rights of his purity: he would have this triumph in the tenderness of his mercy, as well as the severities of his justice. His mercy had not appeared in its true colours, nor attained a regular end, without vengeance on sin. It would have been a compassion, that would, in sparing the sinner, have encouraged the sin, and affronted holiness in the issues of it: had he dispersed his compassions about the world without the regard to his hatred of sin, his mercy had been too cheap, and his holiness had been contemned. His mercy would not have triumphed in his own nature, whilst his holiness had suffered: he had exercised a mercy with the impairing his own glory.

But now, in this way of redemption, the rights of both are secured, both have their due lustre: the odiousness of sin is equally discovered with the greatest of his compassions; an infinite abhorrence of sin, and an infinite

love to the world go hand in hand together: never was so much of the irreconcileableness of sin to him set forth, as in the moment he was opening his heart in the reconciliation of the sinner. Sin is made the chiefest mark of his displeasure, while the poor creature is made the highest object of divine pity. There could have been no motion of mercy, with the least injury to purity and holiness. In this way *mercy and truth*, mercy to the misery of the creature, and truth to the purity of the law, *have met together;* the righteousness of God, and the peace of the sinner, *have kissed each other*, *Psal.* 85. 10.

2. The holiness of God in his hatred of sin, appears in our *justification*, and the conditions he requires of all that would enjoy the benefit of redemption. His wisdom hath so tempered all the conditions of it, that the honour of his holiness is as much preserved, as the sweetness of his mercy is experienced by us. All the conditions are records of his exact purity, as well as of his condescending grace. Our justification is not by the imperfect works of creatures, but by an exact and infinite righteousness, as great as that of the Deity, which had been offended: it being the righteousness of a divine person, upon which account it is called *the righteousness of God;* not only in regard of God's appointing it, and accepting it, but as it is a righteousness of that person that was God. Faith is the condition God requires to justification; but not a *dead*, but an active faith, such a *faith as purifies the heart*, *James* 2. 20. *Acts* 15. 9. He calls for repentance, which is a moral retracting our offences, and an approbation of contemned righteousness and a violated law; an endeavour to regain what is lost, and to pluck out the heart of that sin we have committed. He requires mortification, which is called *crucifying;* whereby a man would strike as full and deadly a blow at his lusts, as was struck at Christ upon the cross, and make them as certainly die as the Redeemer did.

Our own righteousness must be condemned by us, as impure and imperfect: we must disown every thing that is our own, as to righteousness, in reverence to the holiness of God, and the valuation of the righteousness of

Christ. He hath resolved not to bestow the inheritance of glory, without the root of grace. None are partakers of the divine blessedness, that are not partakers of the divine nature: there must be a renewing of his image, before there be a vision of his face, *Heb.* 12. 14. He will not have men brought only into a relative state of happiness by justification, without a real state of grace by sanctification. And so resolved he is in it, that there is no admittance into heaven, but by a persevering in holiness; *a patient continuance in well doing*, *Rom.* 2. 7; patient under the sharpness of affliction, and continuing under the pleasures of prosperity. Hence it is that the gospel, the restoring doctrine, hath not only the motives of rewards to allure us to good, and the danger of punishments to make us afraid of evil, as the law had; but they are set forth in a higher strain, in a way of stronger engagement, the rewards are heavenly, and the punishments eternal: and more powerful motives besides, from the choicer expressions of God's love in the death of his Son. The whole design of it is to re-instate us in a resemblance to this divine perfection; whereby he shews what an affection he hath to this excellency of his nature, and what a detestation he hath of evil, which is contrary to it.

3. It appears in the *actual regeneration* of the redeemed souls, and a carrying it on to *full perfection.* As election is the effect of God's sovereignty, our pardon the fruit of his mercy, our knowledge a stream from his wisdom, our strength an impression of his power; so our purity is a beam from his holiness. The whole works of sanctification, and the preservation of it, our Saviour begs for his disciples of his Father, under this title, *Holy Father, keep them through thy own name,* and *sanctify them through thy truth*, *John* 17. 11, 17; as the proper source whence holiness was to flow to the creature: as the sun is the proper fountain whence light is derived, both to the stars above, and bodies here below. Whence he is not only called holy, but the *Holy One of Israel. I am the Lord your Holy One, the Creator of Israel*, *Isa.* 43. 15: displaying his holiness in them, by a new creation of them as his Israel. As the rectitude of the creature at the

first creation was the effect of his holiness; so the purity of the creature by a new creation is a draught of the same perfection. He is called the *Holy One of Israel* more in Isaiah, that evangelical prophet, in erecting Zion, and forming a people for himself, than in the whole scripture besides. As he sent Jesus Christ to satisfy his justice for the expiation of the guilt of sin; so he sends the Holy Ghost for the cleansing the filth of sin, and over-mastering the power of it: himself is the fountain, the Son is the pattern, and the Holy Ghost the immediate imprinter of this stamp of holiness upon the creature. God hath such a value for this attribute, that he designs the glory of this in the renewing of the creature, more than the happiness of the creature; though the one necessarily follows upon the other, yet the one is the principal design, and the other the consequent of the former: whence our salvation is more frequently set forth, in scripture, by a redemption from sin, and sanctification of the soul, than by a possession of heaven, *Tit.* 2. 11, 12, 13, 14, and many other places.

Indeed, as God could not create a rational creature, without interesting this attribute in a special manner; so he cannot restore the fallen creature without it. As in creating a rational creature, there must be holiness to adorn it, as well as wisdom to form the design, and power to effect it; so in the restoration of the creature, as he could not make a reasonable creature unholy; so he cannot restore a fallen creature, and put him in a meet posture to take pleasure in him, without communicating to him a resemblance of himself. As God cannot be blessed in himself without this perfection of purity: so neither can a creature be blessed without it. As God would be unlovely to himself without this attribute; so would the creature be unlovely to God, without a stamp and mark of it upon his nature. So much is this perfection one with God, valued by him, and interested in all his works and ways.

PART III.

THE HOLINESS OF GOD DEFENDED.

Not to be impeached for creating man mutable—Or giving a law he knew would be violated—Eternal rejection of some—Entrance of sin—Concurrence with creatures in acts of sin—Proposing objects abused to sinful ends—Withdrawing grace—Commanding things against his precepts.

THE third thing I am to do, is to lay down some propositions in the *defence* of God's holiness in all his acts, about or concerning sin. It was a prudent and pious advice of Camero, not to be too busy and rash in inquiries and conclusions about the reason of God's providence in the matter of sin. The scripture has put a bar in the way of such curiosity, by telling us, that the ways of God's wisdom and righteousness in his judgments are *unsearchable*, *Rom.* 11. 33. Much more the ways of God's holiness, as he stands in relation to sin, as a governor of the world; we cannot consider those things without danger of falling. Our eyes are too weak to look upon the sun without being dazzled. Too much curiosity met with a just check in our first parent. To be desirous to know the reason of all God's proceedings in the matter of sin, is to second the ambition of Adam, to be as wise as God, and know the reason of his actings equally with himself. It is more easy, as the same author says, to give an account of God's providence since the revolt of man, and the poison that has universally seized upon human nature,

than to to make guesses at the manner of the fall of the first man. The scriptures have given us but a short account of the manner of it, to discourage too curious inquiries into it.

It is certain that *God made man upright;* and when man sinned in Paradise, God was active in sustaining the substantial nature and act of the sinner while he was sinning, though not in supporting the sinfulness of the act. He was permissive in suffering it; he was negative in withholding that grace which might certainly have prevented his crime, and consequently his ruin; though he withheld nothing that was sufficient for his resistance of that temptation wherewith he was assaulted. And since the fall of man, God, as a wise Governor, is directive of the events of the transgression, and draws the choicest good out of the blackest evil, and limits the sins of men, that they proceed not so far as the evil nature of men would urge them; and as a righteous judge, he takes away the talent from idle servants, and the light from wicked ones, whereby they stumble and fall into crimes, by the inclinations and proneness of their own corrupt natures, leaves them to the bias of their own vicious habits, denies that grace which they have forfeited, and have no right to challenge; and turns their sinful actions into punishments, both to the committers of them, and others.

Proposition I. God's holiness is not chargeable with any *blemish* for his creating man in a mutable state. It is true, angels and men were created with a changeable nature; and though there was a rich and glorious stamp upon them by the hand of God, yet their natures were not incapable of a base and vile stamp from some other principle. As the silver which bears upon it the image of a great prince, is capable of being melted down, and imprinted with no better an image than that of some vile and monstrous beast. Though God made man upright, yet he was capable of seeking *many inventions, Eccles. 7. 29,* yet the hand of God was not defiled by forming man with such a nature. It was suitable to the wisdom of God to give the rational creature, whom he had furnished

with a power of acting righteously, the liberty of choice, and not fix him in an unchangeable state, without a trial of him in his natural state; that if he did obey, his obedience might be the more valuable; and if he did freely offend, his offence might be more inexcusable.

1. No creature can be *capable* of immutability by nature. Mutability is so essential to a creature, that a creature cannot be supposed without it; you must suppose it a creator, not a creature, if you allow it to be of an immutable nature. Immutability is the property of the supreme Being. God *only hath immortality*, 1 *Tim.* 6. 16. Immortality, as opposed not only to a natural, but to a sinful death; the word only appropriates every sort of immortality to God, and excludes every creature, whether angel or man, from a partnership with God in this by nature. Every creature therefore is capable of a death in sin. *None is good but God*, and none is naturally free from change but God; which excludes every creature from the same prerogative; and certainly if one angel sinned, all might have sinned, because there was the same root of mutability in one as well as another. It is as possible for a creature to be creator, as for a creature to have naturally an incommunicable property of the Creator. All things whether angels or men, are made of nothing, and therefore capable of defection;* because a creature being made of nothing, cannot be good *per essentiam*, or essentially good, but by participation from another.

Again, every rational creature, being made of nothing, hath a superior which created him and governs him, and is capable of a precept; and consequently capable of disobedience as well as obedience to the precept, to transgress it as well as obey it. God cannot sin, because he can have no superior to impose a precept on him. A rational creature, with a liberty of will and power of choice, cannot be made by nature of such a mould and temper, but he must be as well capable of chusing wrong, as of chusing right; and therefore the

* Suarez. Vol. 2. p. 548.

standing angels, and glorified saints, though they are immutable, it is not by nature they are so, but by grace, and the good pleasure of God; for though they are in heaven, they have still in their nature a remote power of sinning, but it shall never be brought into act, because God will always incline their wills to love him, and never concur with their wills to any evil act.

Since therefore mutability is essential to a creature, as a creature, this changeableness cannot properly be charged upon God as the author of it; for it was not the term of God's creating act, but did necessarily result from the nature of the creature, as unchangeableness results from the essence of God. The brittleness of a glass is no blame to the art of him that formed it in such a fashion; that imperfection of brittleness is not from the workman, but the matter; so though changeableness be an imperfection, yet it is so necessary a one, that no creature can be naturally without it; besides, though angels and men were mutable by creation, and capable of exercising their wills, yet they were not necessitated to evil; and this mutability did not infer a necessity that they should fall; because some angels, which had the same root of changeableness in their natures with those that fell, did not fall, which they would have done, if capableness of changing, and necessity of changing, were one and the same thing.

2. Though God made the creature mutable, yet *he made him not evil.* There could be nothing of evil in him that God created after his own image, and pronounced *good*, *Gen.* 1. 27, 31. Man had an ability to stand, as well as a capacity to fall: he was created with a principle of acting freely, whereby he was capable of loving God as his chief good, and moving to him as his last end; there was a beam of light in man's understanding to know the rule he was to conform to, a harmony between his reason and his affections, an original righteousness: so that it seemed more easy for him to determine his will to continue in obedience to the precept, than to swerve from it; to adhere to God as his chief good, than to listen to the charms of Satan. God created him with

those advantages, that he might with more facility have kept his eyes fixed upon the divine beauty, than turn his back upon it; and with greater ease have kept the precept God gave him, than have broken it.

The very first thought darted, or impression made by God upon the angelical or human nature, was the knowledge of himself as their author, and could be no other than such whereby both angels and men might be excited to a love of that adorable Being that had framed them so gloriously out of nothing: and if they turned their wills and affections to another object, it was not by the direction of God, but contrary to the impression God had made upon them, or the first thought he flashed into them: they turned themselves to the admiring their own excellency, or affecting an advantage distinct from that which they were too look for only from God. 1 *Tim.* 3. 6. Pride was the cause of the condemnation of Satan. Though the wills of angels and men were created mutable, and so were imperfect, yet they were not created evil. Though they might sin, yet they might not sin, and therefore were not evil in their own nature. What reflection then could this mutability of their nature be upon God? So far is it from any, that he is fully cleared, by storing up in the nature of man sufficient provision against his departure from him. God was so far from creating him evil, that he fortified him with a knowledge in his understanding, and a strength in his nature. to withstand any invasion. The knowledge was exercised by Eve in the very moment of the serpent's assaulting her: *Eve said to the serpent, God hath said, ye shall not eat of it, Gen.* 3. 3; and had her thoughts been intent upon this, *God hath said,* and not diverted to the motions of the sensitive appetite, it had been sufficient to put by all the passes the devil did, or could have made at her. So that you see, though God made the creature mutable, yet he made him not evil. This clears the holiness of God.

3. Therefore it follows, that though God created man changeable, yet he was not *the cause* of his change by his fall. Though man was created defectible, yet he was

not determined by God, influencing his will by any positive act to that change and apostacy. God placed him in a free posture, set life and happiness before him on the one hand, misery and death on the other: as he did not draw him into the arms of perpetual blessedness, so he did not drive him into the gulph of his misery:* he did not incline him to evil. It was repugnant to the goodness of God to corrupt the righteousness of those faculties he had so lately beautified him with. It was not likely he should deface the beauty of that work he had composed with so much wisdom and skill. Would he by any act of his own make that bad, which but a little before he had acquiesced in as good? Angels and men were left to their liberty and conduct of their natural faculties; and if God inspired them with any motions, they could not but be motions to good, and suited to that righteous nature with which he had endued them. But it is most probable that God did not in a supernatural way act inwardly upon the mind of man, but left him wholly to that power which he had in creation furnished him with.

The scripture frees God fully from any blame in this, and lays it wholly upon Satan as the tempter, and upon man as the determiner of his own will. *Eve took of the fruit, and did eat; and Adam took from her of the fruit, and did eat*, *Gen.* 3. 6. And Solomon, *Eccles.* 7. 29, distinguisheth God's works in the creation of man *upright*, from man's work in seeking out those ruining *inventions*. God created man in a righteous state, and man cast himself into a forlorn state. As he was a mutable creature, he was from God; as he was a changed and corrupted creature, it was from Satan seducing, and his own pliableness in admitting. As silver, and gold, and other metals, were created by God in such a form and figure, yet capable of receiving other forms by the industrious art of man. When the image of a man is put upon a piece of metal, God is not said to create that image, though he created the substance with such a property, that it was capable of receiving it: this capacity is from the nature

* Amyral. Moral. tom. 1. p. 615, 616.

of the metal by God's creation of it, but the carving the figure of this or that man, is not the act of God, but the act of man. As images in scripture are called the work of men's hands, in regard of the imagery, though the matter, wood or stone, upon which the image was carved, was a work of God's creative power. When an artificer frames an excellent instrument, and a musician exactly tunes it, and it comes out of their hands without blemish, but capable of being untuned by some rude hand, or receive an injury by a sudden fall, if it meet with a disaster, is either the workman or musician to be blamed? The ruin of a house, caused by the wastefulness or carelessness of the tenant, is not to be imputed to the workman that built it strong, and left it in a good posture.

Proposition II. God's holiness is not blemished by enjoining man a law, *which he knew he would not observe.*

1. The law is not *above his strength.* Had the law been impossible to be observed, no crime could have been imputed to the subject, the fault had lain wholly upon the governor; the non-observance of it had been from want of strength, and not of will. Had God commanded Adam to fly up to the sun, when he had not given him wings, Adam might have a will to obey it, but his power would be too short to perform it. But the law set him for a rule, had nothing of impossibility in it; it was easy to be observed; the command was rather below, than above his strength; and the sanction of it was more apt to restrain and scare him from the breach of it, than encourage any daring attempts against it: He had as much power, or rather more, to conform to it, than to warp from it; and greater arguments and interest to be observant of it, than to violate it; his all was secured by the one, and his ruin ascertained by the other. The *commands* of God are not *grievous;* from the first to the last command, there is nothing impossible, nothing hard to the original and created nature of man, which were all summed up in a love to God, which was the pleasure and delight of man, as well as his duty, if he had not by his inconsideration neglected the dictates and resolves of his own understanding. The law was suited to the

strength of man, and fitted for the improvement and perfection of his nature: in which respect the apostle calls it good, as it refers to man, as well as holy, as it refers to God. *Rom.* 7. 12.

Now since God created man a creature capable to be governed by a law, and as a rational creature endued with understanding and will, not to be governed according to his nature without law; was it congruous to the wisdom of God to respect only the future state of man, which from the depth of his infinite knowledge, he did infallibly foresee would be miserable, by the wilful defection of man from the rule? Had it been agreeable to the wisdom of God to respect only this future state, and not the present state of the creature; and therefore leave him lawless, because he knew he would violate the law? Should God forbear to act like a wise governor, because he foresaw that man would cease to act like an obedient subject? Shall a righteous magistrate forbear to make just and good laws, because he foresees, either from the dispositions of his subjects, their ill humour, or some circumstances which will intervene, that multitudes of them will incline to break those laws, and fall under the penalty of them? No blame can be upon that magistrate who minds the rule of righteousness, and the necessary duty of his government, since he is not the cause of those turbulent affections in men, which he wisely foresees will rise up against his just edicts.

2. Though the law now be *above the strength of man*, yet is not the holiness of God *blemished by keeping it up.* It is true, God hath been graciously pleased to mitigate the severity and rigour of the law by the entrance of the gospel, yet where men refuse the terms of the gospel, they continue themselves under the condemnation of the law, and are justly guilty of the breach of it, though they have no strength to observe it. The law, as I said before, was not above man's strength, when he was possessed of original righteousness, though it be above man's strength, since he was stripped of original righteousness. The command was dated before man had contracted his impotency, when he had a power to keep it as well as to

break it. Had it been enjoined to man only after the fall, and not before, he might have had a better pretence to excuse himself, because of the impossibility of it; yet he would not have had sufficient excuse, since the impossibility did not result from the nature of the law, but from the corrupted nature of the creature. It *was weak through the flesh, Rom.* 8. 3, but it was promulgated when man had a strength proportioned to the commands of it. And now since man hath unhappily made himself incapable of obeying it, must God's holiness in his law be blemished for enjoining it? Must he abrogate those commands, and prohibit what before he enjoined, for the satisfaction of the corrupted creature? Would not this be his ceasing to be holy, that his creature might be unblameably unrighteous? Must God divest himself of his holiness, because man will not discharge his iniquity? He cannot be the cause of sin, by keeping up the law, who would be the cause of all the unrighteousness of men, by removing the authority of it. Some things in the law that are intrinsically good in their own nature are indispensible, and it is repugnant to the nature of God not to command them. If he were not the guardian of his indispensible law, he would be the cause and countenancer of the creature's iniquity. So little reason have men to charge God with being the cause of their sin, by not repealing his law to gratify their impotence, that he would be unholy if he did. God must not lose his purity, because man hath lost his, and cast away the right of his sovereignty, because man hath cast away his power of obedience.

3. God's foreknowledge that his law *would not be observed,* lays no blame upon him. Though the foreknowledge of God be infallible, yet it doth not necessitate the creature in acting. It was certain from eternity, that Adam would fall, that men would do such and such actions, that Judas would betray our Saviour; God foreknew all those things from eternity; but it is as certain that this foreknowledge did not necessitate the will of Adam, or any other branch of his posterity, in the doing those actions that were so foreseen by God; they voluntarily run into such courses, not by any impulsion. God's

knowledge was not suspended between certainty and uncertainty: he certainly foreknew that his law would be broken by Adam; he foreknew it in his own decree of not hindering him, by giving Adam the efficacious grace which would infallibly have prevented it; yet Adam did freely break this law, and never imagined that the foreknowledge of God did necessitate him to it: he could find no cause of his own sin, but the liberty of his own will: he charges the occasion of his sin upon the woman, and consequently upon God in giving the woman to him, *Gen.* 3. 12. He could not be so ignorant of the nature of God, as to imagine him without the foresight of future things, since his knowledge of what was to be known of God by creation, was in all probability greater than any man's since. But however, if he were not acquainted with the notion of God's foreknowledge, he could not be ignorant of his own act; there could not have been any necessity upon him, any kind of constraint of him in his actions that could have been unknown to him; and he would not have omitted a plea of so strong a nature, when he was upon his trial for life or death; especially when he urges so weak an argument to impute his crime to God, as the gift of the woman; as if that which was designed him for a help, were intended for his ruin.

If God's prescience takes away the libertyof the creature, there is no such thing as a free action in the world, (for there is nothing done but is foreknown by God, else we render God of a limited understanding,) nor ever was, no not by God himself *ad extra:* for whatsoever he hath done in creation, whatsoever he hath done since the creation, was foreknown by him; he resolved to do it, and therefore foreknew that he would do it: did God do it therefore necessarily, as necessity is opposed to liberty? As he freely decrees what he will do, so he effects what he freely decreed. Foreknowledge is so far from intrenching upon the liberty of the will, that predetermination, which in the notion of it speaks something more, does not dissolve it: God did not only foreknow, but determine the suffering of Christ, *Acts* 4. 27, 28. It was necessary therefore, that Christ should suffer, that God might not

be mistaken in his foreknowledge, or come short of his determinate decree: but did this take away the liberty of Christ in suffering? *Who offered himself up to God, Eph.* 5. 2, that is, by a voluntary act, as well as designed to do it by a determinate counsel. It infallibly secured the event, but did not annihilate the liberty of the action, either in Christ's willingness to suffer, or the crime of the Jews that made him suffer.

God's prescience is God's provision of things arising from their proper causes: as a gardener foresees in his plants the leaves and the flowers that will arise from them in the spring, because he knows the strength and nature of their several roots which lie under ground, but his foresight of these things is not the cause of the rise and appearance of those flowers. If any of us see a ship moving towards such a rock or quick-sand, and know it to be governed by a negligent pilot, we shall certainly foresee that the ship will be torn in pieces by the rock, or swallowed up by the sands; but is this foresight of ours from the causes, any cause of the effect, or can we from hence be said to be the authors of the miscarriage of the ship, and the loss of the passengers and goods? The fall of Adam was foreseen by God to come to pass by the consent of his free will in the choice of the proposed temptation: God foreknew Adam would sin, and if Adam would not have sinned, God would have foreknown that he would not sin. Adam might easily have detected the serpent's fraud, and made a better election; God foresaw that he would not do it; God's foreknowledge did not make Adam guilty or innocent; whether God had foreknown it or no, he was guilty by a free choice, and a willing neglect of his own duty. Adam knew that God foreknew that he might eat of the fruit, and fall and die, because God had forbidden him; the foreknowledge that he would do it, was no more a cause of his action, than the foreknowledge that he might do it. Judas certainly knew that his Master foreknew that he should betray him, for Christ had acquainted him with it, *John* 13. 21, 26. yet he never charged this foreknowledge of Christ with any guilt of his treachery.

Proposition III. The holiness of God is not blemished by *decreeing the eternal rejection of some men.* Reprobation in its first notion is an act of preterition, or passing by. A man is not made wicked by the act of God; but it supposeth him wicked; and so it is nothing else but God's leaving a man in that guilt and impurity wherein he beholds him. In its second notion it is an ordination, not to a crime, but to a punishment; *an ordaining to condemnation, Jude* 4. And though it be an eternal act of God, yet in order of nature it follows upon the foresight of the transgression of man, and supposeth the crime. God considers Adam's revolt, and views the whole mass of his corrupted posterity, and chuses some to reduce to himself by his grace, and leaves others to lie sinking in their ruins. Since all mankind fell by the fall of Adam, and have corruption conveyed to them successively by that root whereof they are branches; all men might justly be left in that miserable condition to which they were reduced by the apostacy of their common head; and God might have passed by the whole race of man, as well as the fallen angels, without any hope of redemption. He was no more bound to restore man, than to restore devils, nor was he bound to repair the nature of any one son of Adam; and had he dealt with men as he dealt with the devils, they had all of them as little just ground to complain of God; for all men deserved to be left to themselves, for all were *concluded under sin;* but God calls some to make them monuments of his grace, which is an act of the sovereign mercy of that dominion whereby he *hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, Rom.* 9. 18. Others he passes by, and leaves them remaining in that corruption of nature wherein they were born.

If men have a power to dispose of their own goods, without any unrighteousness, why should not God dispose of his own grace, and bestow it upon whom he pleases, since it is a debt to none; but a free gift to any that enjoy it? * God is not the cause of sin in this, because his operation about this is negative; it is not

* Amyrald. defens. de Calv. p. 145.

an action, but a denial of action, and therefore cannot be the cause of the evil actions of men. God acts nothing, but withholds his power; he does not enlighten their minds, nor incline their wills so powerfully, as to expel their darkness, and root out those evil habits which possess them by nature. God could, if he would, savingly enlighten the minds of all men in the world, and quicken their hearts with a new life by an invincible grace; but in not doing it, there is no positive act of God, but a cessation of action; we may with as much reason say, that God is the cause of all the sinful actions that are committed by the hosts of infernal spirits, since their first rebellion, because he leaves them to themselves, and bestows not a new grace upon them; as say God is the cause of the sins of those that he overlooks and leaves in that state of guilt wherein he found them. God did not pass by any without the consideration of sin; so that this act of God is not repugnant to his holiness, but conformable to his justice.

Proposition IV. The holiness of God is not blemished by his *secret will to suffer sin to enter into the world.* God never willed sin by his *preceptive* will. It was never founded upon, or produced by any word of his, as the creation was. He never said, let there be sin under the heaven, as he said, *let there be water under the heaven.* Nor does he will it by infusing any habit of it, or stirring up inclinations to it; no, *God tempts no man, James* 1. 13. Nor does he will it by his *approving* will; it is detestable to him, nor ever can be otherwise: he cannot approve it either before commission or after.

1. The will of God is in some sort *concurrent* with sin. He doth not properly will it, but he wills not to hinder it, which by his omnipotence he could. If he positively willed it, it might be wrought by himself, and so could not be evil. If he did in no sort will it, it would not be committed by his creature. Sin entered into the world, either God willing the permission of it, or not willing the permission of it. The latter cannot be said; for then the creature is more powerful than God, and can do that which God will not permit. God can, if he be pleased,

banish all sin in a moment out of the world; he could have prevented the revolt of angels, and the fall of man; they did not sin whether he would or no; he might by his grace have stepped in the first moment, and made a special impression upon them of the happiness they already possessed, and the misery they would incur by any wicked attempt. He could as well have prevented the sin of the fallen angels, and confirmed them in grace, as of those that continued in their happy state; he might have appeared to man, informed him of the issue of his design, and made secret impressions upon his heart, since he was acquainted with every avenue to his will. God could have kept all sin out of the world, as well as all creatures from breathing in it; he was as well able to keep sin for ever out of the world, as to let creatures lie in the womb of chaos. To say God wills sin as he does other things, is to deny his holiness; to say it entered without his will, is to deny his omnipotence. If he necessitated Adam to fall; what shall we think of his purity? If Adam fell without any concern of God's will in it, what shall we say of his sovereignty? The one taints his holiness, and the other abridges his power. If it came without his will, and he did not foresee it, where is his omniscience? If it entered whether he would or no, where is his omnipotence? *Who hath resisted his will? Rom.* 9, 19. There cannot be a lustful act in Abimelech, if God will withhold his power; *I withheld thee, Gen.* 20. 6; nor a cursing word in Balaam's mouth, unless God give power to speak it; *Have I now any power at all to say any thing? The word that God puts in my mouth, that shall I speak, Numb.* 22. 38. As no action could be sinful if God had not forbidden it; so no sin could be committed, if God did not will to give way to it.

2. God does not will sin *directly*, and by an *efficacious* will. He does not directly will it, because he hath prohibited it by his law, which is a discovery of his will. So that if he should directly will sin, and directly prohibit it, he would will good and evil in the same manner, and there would be contradictions in God's will: To will sin absolutely, is to work it, *God hath done whatsoever he pleased,*

Psal. 115. 3. God cannot absolutely will it, because he cannot work it. * God wills good by a positive decree, because he hath decreed to effect it. He wills evil by a privative decree, because he hath decreed not to give that grace which would certainly prevent it. † God does not will sin simply, for that were to approve it, but he wills it, in order to that good his wisdom will bring forth from it. He wills not sin for itself, but for the event. To will sin as sin, or as purely evil, is not in the capacity of a creature, neither of man nor devil. The will of a rational creature cannot will any thing but under the appearance of good, of some good in the sin itself, or some good in the issue of it. Much more is this far from God, ‡ who being infinitely good, cannot will evil as evil; and being infinitely knowing, cannot will that for good which is evil. Infinite wisdom can be under no error or mistake: to will sin as sin, would be an unanswerable blemish on God; but to will to suffer it in order to good, is the glory of his wisdom; it could never have lifted up its head, unless there had been some decree of God concerning it. And there had been no decree of God concerning it, had he not intended to bring good and glory out of it. If God directly willed the discovery of his grace and mercy to the world, he did in some sort will sin, as that without which there could not have been any appearance of mercy in the world; for an innocent creature is not the object of mercy, but a miserable creature; and no rational creature but must be sinful before it be miserable.

3. God wills the *permission* of sin. He does not positively will sin, but he positively wills to permit it. And though he doth not approve of sin, yet he approves of that act of his will, whereby he permits it. For since that sin could not enter into the world without some concern of God's will about it, that act of his will that gave way to it, could not be displeasing to him: God could never be displeased with his own act: *he is not as man, that*

* Rispolis. † Bradward, lib. 1. cap. 34. God wills it secundum quid.
‡ Aquin. cont. Gent. l. 1. c. 95.

he should repent, 1 *Sam.* 15. 29. What God cannot repent of, he cannot but approve of: it is contrary to the blessedness of God to disapprove of, and be displeased with, any act of his own will. If he hated any act of his own will, he would hate himself, he would be under a torture; every one that hates his own acts, is under some disturbance and torment for them. That which is permitted by him, is in itself, and in regard of the evil of it, hateful to him; but as the prospect of that good which he aims at in the permission of it is pleasing to him; so that act of his will whereby he permits it, is ushered in by an approving act of his understanding. Either God approved of the permission or not; if he did not approve his own act of permission, he could not have decreed an act of permission. It is inconceivable that God should decree such an act which he detested, and positively will that which he hated. Though God hated sin, as being against his holiness, yet he did not hate the permission of sin, as being subservient by the immensity of his wisdom to his own glory. He could never be displeased with that which was the result of his eternal counsel, as this decree of permitting sin was, as well as any other decree resolved upon in his own breast. For as God acts nothing in time, but what he decreed from eternity, so he permits nothing in time, but what he decreed from eternity to permit. To speak properly, therefore, God doth not will sin, but he wills the permission of it, and this will to permit is active and positive in God.

4. This act of permission is not a *mere* permission, but such an one as is attended with the *certainty of the event*. The decrees of God to make use of the sin of man for the glory of his grace in the mission and passion of his Son, hung upon the entrance of sin. Would it consist with the wisdom of God to decree such great and stupendous things, the event whereof should depend upon an uncertain foundation in which he might be mistaken? God would have sat in counsel from eternity to no purpose, if he had only permitted those things to be done, without any knowledge of the event of this permission; God would not have made such provision for redemption

to no purpose, or an uncertain purpose, which would have been, if man had not fallen; or if it had been an uncertainty with God whether he would fall or no. Though the will of God about sin was permissive, yet the will of God about that glory he would promote by the defect of the creature, was positive; and therefore he would not suffer so many positive acts of his will to hang upon an uncertain event; and therefore he wisely and righteously ordered all things to the accomplishment of his great and gracious purposes.

5. This act of permission does not *taint* the holiness of God. That there is such an act as permission, is clear in scripture. *Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, Acts* 14. 16. But that it doth not blemish the holiness of God will appear,

1. From the *nature* of this permission.

It is not a *moral* permission, a giving *liberty of toleration by any law* to commit sin with impunity; when what one law did forbid, another law doth leave indifferent to be done or not, as a man sees good in himself. As when there is a law made among men, that no man shall go out of such a city or country without license; to go out without license is a crime by the law; but when that law is repealed by another, that gives liberty for men to go and come at their pleasure: it doth not make their going or coming necessary, but leaves those which were before bound, to do as they see good in themselves. Such a permission makes a fact lawful, though not necessary; a man is not obliged to do it, but he is left to his own discretion to do as he pleases, without being chargeable with a crime for doing it. Such a permission there was granted by God to Adam of eating of the fruits of the garden, to choose any of them for food, except *the tree of knowledge of good and evil.* It was a precept to him, not to *eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil;* but the other was a permission, whereby it was lawful for him to feed upon any other that was most agreeable to his appetite; but there is not such permission in the case of sin; this had been an indulgence of it, which had freed man from any

crime, and consequently from punishment; because by such permission by law, he would have had authority to sin, if he pleased. God did not remove the law, which he had before placed as a bar against evil, nor removed that moral impediment of his threatening; such a permission as this, to make sin lawful or indifferent, had been a blot upon God's holiness.

But this permission of God in the case of sin, is no more than the *not hindering a sinful action, which he could have prevented.* It is not so much an action of God, as a suspension of his influence, which might have hindered an evil act, and a forbearing to restrain the faculties of man from sin; it is properly the not exerting that efficacy, which might change the counsels that are taken, and prevent the action intended. As when one man sees another ready to fall, and can preserve him from falling by reaching out his hand; he permits him to fall, that is, he hinders him not from falling. So God describes his act about Abimelech, *I withheld thee from sinning against me, therefore suffered I thee not to touch her, Gen.* 20. 6. If Abimelech had sinned, he had sinned by God's permission; that is, by God's not hindering, or not restraining him, by making any impressions upon him. So that permission is only a withholding that help and grace, which, if bestowed, would have been an effectual remedy to prevent the crime; and it is rather a suspension or cessation, than properly a permission; and sin may be said to be committed not without God's permission, rather than by his permission.

Thus in the fall of man, God did not hold the reins strict upon Satan to restrain him from laying the bait, nor restrain Adam from swallowing the bait; he kept to himself that efficacious grace, which he might have darted out upon man to prevent his fall. God left Satan to his malice of tempting, and Adam to his liberty of resisting, and his own strength, to use that sufficient grace he had furnished him with, whereby he might have resisted and overcome the temptation. As he did not drive man to it, so he did not secretly restrain him from it. So in

the Jews crucifying our Saviour; God did not imprint upon their minds by his Spirit, a consideration of the greatness of the crime, and the horror of his justice dué to it; and being without those impediments, they run furiously of their own accord to the commission of that evil. As when a man lets a wolf or dog out upon his prey, he takes off the chain which held them, and they presently act according to their natures.* In the fall of angels and men, God's act was a leaving them to their own strength; in sins after the fall, it is God's giving them up to their own corruption. The first is a pure suspension of grace; the other hath the nature of a punishment, *So I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts*; *Psal.* 81. 12. The first object of this permissive will of God was, to leave angels and men to their own liberty, and the use of their free will, which was natural to them,† not adding that supernatural grace which was necessary, not that they should not at all sin, but that they should infallibly not sin; they had strength sufficient to avoid sin, but not sufficient infallibly to avoid sin; grace sufficient to preserve them, but not sufficient to confirm them.

Now this permission is not *the cause of sin*, nor does it *blemish* the holiness of God. It does not intrench upon the freedom of men, but supposeth it, establishes it, and leaves man to it. God acted nothing, but only ceased to act; and therefore could not be the efficient cause of man's sin. As God is not the author of good, but by willing and effecting it; so he is not the author of evil but by willing and effecting it; but he doth not positively will evil, nor effect it by any efficacy of his own. Permission is no action, nor the cause of that action which is permitted; but the will of that person who is permitted to do such an action, is the cause.‡ God can no more be said to be the cause of sin, by suffering a creature to act as it will; than he can be said to be the cause of the not being of any creature, by denying it being,

* Lawson, page 64. † Suarez, Vol. 4. p. 414.
‡ Suarez, de Legib. p. 43.

and letting it remain nothing; it is not from God that it is nothing, it is nothing in itself. Though God be said to be the cause of creation, yet he is never by any said to be the cause of that nothing which was before creation. This permission of God is not the cause of sin, but the cause of not hindering sin. Man and angels had a physical power of sinning from God, as they were created with free will, and supported in their natural strength; but the moral power to sin was not from God; he counselled them not to it, laid no obligation upon them to use their natural power for such an end. He only left them to their freedom, and did not hinder them in their acting what he was resolved to permit.

2. The holiness of God is not tainted by this, because he was under *no obligation to hinder their commission of sin.* Ceasing to act, whereby to prevent a crime or mischief, brings not a person permitting it, under guilt, unless where he is under an obligation to prevent it; but God, in regard of his absolute dominion, cannot be charged with any such obligation. One man that does not hinder the murder of another, when it is in his power, is guilty of the murder in part; but it is to be considered, that he is under a tie by nature, as being of the same kind, and being the other's brother by a communion of blood: also under an obligation of the law of charity, enacted by the common sovereign of the world; but what tie was there upon God, since the infinite transcendency of his nature, and his sovereign dominion frees him from any such obligation? *If he takes away, who shall say, what doest thou? Job* 9. 12. God might have prevented the fall of men and angels, he might have confirmed them all in a state of perpetual innocence; but where is the obligation? He had made the creature a debtor to himself, but he owed nothing to the creature. Before God can be charged with any guilt in this case, it must be proved, not only that he could, but that he was bound, to hinder it. No person can be justly charged with another's fault, merely for not preventing it, unless he be bound to prevent it; else not only the first sin of angels and man would be imputed to God, as the author, but all the

sins of men. He could not be obliged by any law, because he had no superior to impose any law upon him; and it will be hard to prove, that he was obliged from his own nature to prevent the entrance of sin, which he would use as an occasion to declare his own holiness, so transcendent a perfection of his nature, more than ever it could have been manifested by a total exclusion of it, viz. in the death of Christ. He is no more bound in his own nature, to preserve by supernatural grace his creature from falling, after he had framed him with a sufficient strength to stand; than he was obliged in his own nature to bring his creature into being, when it was nothing. He is not bound to create a rational creature, much less bound to create him with supernatural gifts; though since God would make a rational creature, he could not but make him with a natural uprightness and rectitude.

God did as much for angels and men, as became a wise governor. He had published his law, enforced it by severe penalties, and the creature wanted not natural strength to observe and obey it. Had not man a power to obey all the precepts of the law as well as one? How was God bound to give him more grace, since what he had already was enough to shield him, and keep up his resistance against all the power of hell? It had been enough to have pointed his will against the temptation, and he had kept off the force of it. Was there any promise passed to Adam of any further grace, which he could plead as a tie upon God? No such voluntary limit upon God's supreme dominion appears upon record. Was any thing due to man, which he had not? Any thing promised him, which was not performed? What action of debt then can the creature bring against God? Indeed, when man began to neglect the light of his own reason, and became inconsiderate of the precept, God might have enlightened his understanding by a special supernatural beam, and imprinted upon him a particular consideration of the necessity of his obedience, the misery he was approaching to by his sin, the folly of any such apprehension of an equality in knowledge; he might

have convinced him of the falsity of the serpent's arguments, and have shewed him the venom that lay under those baits. But how does it appear that God was bound to those additional acts, when he had already lighted up in him a *spirit, which was the candle of the Lord, Prov.* 20. 27, whereby he was able to discern all, if he had attended to it. It was enough that God did not necessitate man to sin, did not counsel him to it; that he had given him sufficient warning in the threatening, and sufficient strength in his faculties, to fortify him against temptation. He gave him what was due to him as a creature of his own framing; he withdrew no help from him, that was due to him as a creature, and what was not due he was not bound to impart. Man did not beg preserving grace of God, and God was not bound to offer it, when he was not petitioned for it especially: yet if he had begged it, God having before furnished him sufficiently, might by the right of his sovereign dominion have denied it without any impeachment of his holiness and righteousness. Though he would not in such a case have dealt so bountifully with his creature as he might have done; yet he could not have been impleaded, as dealing unrighteously with his creature. The single word that God had already uttered, when he gave him his precept, was enough to oppose against all the devil's wiles, which tended to invalidate that word: the understanding of man could not imagine that the word of God was vainly spoken; and the very suggestion of the devil, as if the Creator should envy his creature, would have appeared ridiculous, if he had attended to the voice of his own reason. God had done enough for him, and was obliged to do no more, and dealt not unrighteously in leaving him to act according to the principles of his nature.

To conclude: If God's permission of sin were enough to charge it upon God, or if God had been obliged to give Adam supernatural grace: Adam that had so capacious a mind, could not be without such a plea as this, "Lord, thou mightest have prevented it; the commission of it by me could not have been without thy permission of it." Or, "thou hast been wanting to me, as the au-

thor of my nature." No such plea is brought by Adam into the court, when God tried and cast him: no such pleas can have any strength in them. Adam had reason enough to know, that there was sufficient reason to overrule such a plea.

Since the permission of sin casts no imputation upon the holiness of God, as I think hath been cleared, we may under this head consider two things more.

1. That God's permission of sin, is *not so much as his restraint* or *limitation* of it. Since the entrance of the first sin into the world by Adam, God is more a hinderer than a permitter of it. If he hath permitted that which he could have prevented, he prevents a world more, that he might, if he pleased, permit. The hedges about sin are larger than the outlets; they are but a few streams that glide about the world, in comparison of that mighty torrent he dams up both in men and devils. He that understands what a lake of Sodom there is in every man's nature, since the universal infection of human nature, as the apostle describes it, *Rom.* 3. 9, 10, &c. must acknowledge, that if God should cast the reins upon the necks of sinful men, they would run into thousands of abominable crimes more than they do: the impression of all natural laws would be razed out, the world would be a public stew, and a more bloody slaughter-house; human society would sink into chaos; no star-light of commendable morality would be seen in it; the world would be no longer an earth, but an hell, and sink into deeper wickedness than it does. If God did not limit sin, as he does the sea, and put bars to the waves of the heart, as well as those of the waters, and say of them, *hitherto you shall go, and no further;* man hath such a furious ocean in him, as would over-flow the banks; and where it makes a breach in one place, it would in a thousand, if God should suffer it to act according to its impetuous current.

As the devil hath lust enough to destroy all mankind, if God did not bridle him, he would deal with every man as he did with Job, ruin their comforts, and deform their bodies, with *sore boils*, infect religion with a thousand more errors; fling disorders into commonwealths,

and make them as a fiery furnace, full of nothing but flame. If he were not chained by that powerful arm, that might let him loose to fulfil his malicious fury; what rapines, murders, thefts, would be committed, if he did not prevent him? Abimelech would not only design but accomplish his criminal object against Sarah; Laban not only pursue Jacob, but rifle him; Saul not only hate David, but murder him; David not only threaten Nabal, but root him up, and his family, did not God *girdle* in the *wrath of man*, *Psa.* 76. 10. A greater remainder of wrath is pent in, than flames out, which yet swells for an outlet. God may be concluded more holy in preventing men's sins, than the author of sin in permitting some; since were it not for his restraints by conscience, and infused motions and outward impediments, the world would swarm more with this cursed brood.

2. His permission of sin is in order to *his own glory*, and a *greater good*. It is no reflection upon the divine goodness to leave man to his own conduct, whereby such a deformity of sin sets foot in the world; since he makes his wisdom illustrious in bringing good out of evil, and a good greater than that evil he suffered to spring up. God did not permit sin, as sin, or permit it barely for itself. As sin is not lovely in its own nature; so neither is the permission of sin intrinsically good or amiable for itself, but for those ends aimed at in the permission of it. God permitted sin, but approved not of *sin* the object of that permission; because, that considered in its own nature is solely evil: nor can we think, that God could approve of the act of permission, considered only in itself as an act; but as it respected that event which his wisdom would order by it. We cannot suppose that God should permit sin, but for some great and glorious end: for it is the manifestation of his own glorious perfections he intends in all the acts of his will. *The Lord hath made all things for himself*, *Prov.* 16. 4; פעל hath *wrought* all things; which is not only his act of creation, but ordination. *For himself*, that is, for the discovery of the excellency of his nature, an

the communication of himself to his creature. Sin indeed in its own nature hath no tendency to a good end, the womb of it teems with nothing but monsters; it is a contempt of God's sovereignty, and a slight of his goodness: it both deforms and torments the person that acts it; it is black and abominable, and hath not a mite of goodness in the nature of it. If it ends in any good, it is only from that infinite transcendency of skill, that can bring good out of evil, as well as light out of darkness.

Therefore God did not permit it as sin, but as it was an occasion for the manifestation of his own glory. Though the goodness of God would have appeared in the preservation of the world, as well as it did in the creation of it; yet his mercy could not have appeared without the entrance of sin, because the object of mercy is a miserable creature; but man could not be miserable as long as he remained innocent. The reign of sin opened a door for the reign and triumph of grace, *As sin hath reigned unto death, so might grace reign through righteousness to eternal life: Rom.* 5. 21. Without it, the tidings of mercy had never sounded, and the ravishing music of divine grace could never have been heard by the creature. Mercy, which renders God so amiable, could never else have beamed out to the world. Angels and men upon this occasion beheld the stirrings of divine grace, and the tenderness of divine nature, and the glory of the divine persons in their several functions about the redemption of man, which had else been a *spring shut up and a fountain sealed;* the song of *glory to God, and good will to men,* in a way of redemption had never been sung by them.

It appears in his dealings with Adam, that he permitted his fall, not only to shew his justice in punishing, but principally his mercy in rescuing; since he proclaims to him first the promise of a Redeemer, to *bruise the serpent's head,* before he settled the punishment he should smart under in the world, *Gen.* 3. 15, 16, 17. And what fairer prospect could the creature have of the holiness of God, and his hatred of sin, than in the edge of that sword of justice, which punished it in the sinner; but glittered

more in the punishment of a surety so nearly allied to him. Had not man been criminal, he could not have been punishable, nor could any have been punishable for him: and the pulse of divine holiness could not have beaten so quick, and been so visible, without an exercise of his vindicative justice. He left man's mutable nature, to fall under righteousness, that thereby he might commend the righteousness of his own nature, *Rom.* 3. 7.

Adam's sin in its nature tended to the ruin of the world, and God takes occasion from it for the glory of his grace in the redemption of the world: he brings forth thereby a new scene of wonders from heaven, and a surprising knowledge on earth; as the sun breaks out more strongly after a night of darkness and tempest. As God in creation framed a chaos by his power, to manifest his wisdom in bringing order out of disorder, light out of darkness, beauty out of confusion and deformity; when he was able by a word to have made all creatures stand up in their beauty, without the precedency of a chaos: so God permitted a moral chaos, to manifest greater wisdom in the repairing a broken image, and restoring a deplorable creature, and bringing out those perfections of his nature, which had else been wrapped up in a perpetual silence in his own bosom.* It was therefore very congruous to the holiness of God, to permit that which he could make subservient for his own glory, and particularly for the manifestation of this attribute of holiness, which seems to be in opposition to such a permission.

Proposition V. The holiness of God is not blemished by his *concurrence with the creature in the material part of a sinful act.* Some, to free God from having any hand in sin, deny his concurrence to the actions of the creature; because if he concurs to a sinful action, he concurs to the sin also: not understanding, how there can be a distinction between the act and the sinfulness or viciousness of it; and how God can concur to a natural action, without being stained by that moral evil which cleaves to it.

For the understanding of this, observe, 1. There is

* Of the wisdom of God in the permitting sin in order to redemption, I have handled in the attribute of wisdom.

a concurrence of God to *all the acts of the creature; In him we live, and move, and have our being, Acts* 17. 28. We depend upon God in our acting, as well as in our being: there is as much an efficacy of God in our motion, as in our production; as none have life without his power in producing it, so none have any operation without his providence concurring with it. *In him*, or *by him*, that is, by his virtue preserving and governing our motions, as well by his power bringing us into being. Hence man is compared to an *axe, Isa.* 10. 15, an instrument that hath no action, without the co-operation of a superior agent handling it: and the actions of the second causes are ascribed to God; the *grass*, that is the product of the sun, rain, and earth, he is said to make *to grow upon the mountains, Psal.* 147. 8; and the skin and flesh, which is by natural generation, he is said to *clothe us with, Job* 10. 5, in regard of his co-working with second causes, according to their natures. As nothing can exist, so nothing can operate without him; let his concurrence be removed, and the being and action of the creature cease: remove the sun from the horizon, or a candle from the room, and the light which flowed from either of them ceases. Without God's preserving and concurring power, the course of nature would sink, and the creation be in vain.

* All created things depend upon God's agents, as well as beings, and are subordinate to him in a way of action, as well as in a way of existing. If God suspend his influence from their action, they would cease to act, as well as if God suspended his influence from their being, they would cease to be. God supports the nature whereby actions are wrought, the mind where actions are consulted, and the will where actions are determined, and the motive power whereby actions are produced. The mind could not contrive, nor the hand act wickedness, if God did not support the power of the one in the designing, and the strength of the other in executing a wicked intention. Every faculty in its being, and every faculty in its motion,

* Suarez, Metaph. part. 1. p. 552.

hath a dependence upon the influence of God. To make the creature independent upon God in any thing which speaks perfection, as action considered as action is, is to make a creature a sovereign being. Indeed we cannot imagine the concurrence of God to the good actions of men since the fall, without granting a concurrence of God to evil actions; because there is no action so purely good, but hath a mixture of evil in it, though it takes its denomination of good from the better part. *There is no man that doeth good and sins not, Eccles.* 7. 20.

2. Though the natural virtue of doing a sinful action be from God, and supported by him, yet this does not blemish the holiness of God; *while God concurs with them in the act, he instils no evil into men.*

1. No act in regard of the *substance* of it is evil. Most of the actions of our faculties, as they are actions, might have been in the state of innocency. Eating is an act Adam would have used, if he had stood firm, but not eating to excess. Worship was an act that should have been performed to God in innocence, but not hypocritically. Every action is good by a physical goodness, as it is an act of the mind or hand, which have a natural goodness by creation; but every action is not morally good. The physical goodness of the action depends on God, the moral evil on the creature.* There is no action, as a corporeal action, that is prohibited by the law of God; but as it springs from an evil disposition, and is tainted by a venomous temper of mind. There is no action so bad, as attended with such objects and circumstances, but if the objects and circumstances were changed, might be a good and commendable action; so that the moral goodness or badness of an act is not to be esteemed from the substance of the act, which hath always a physical goodness; but from the objects, circumstances, and constitution of the mind in the doing of it.

Worship is an act good in itself, but the worship of an image is bad in regard of the object. Were that act of worship directed to God that is paid to a statue, and

* Amyrald. de Libero arbit. p. 98, 99.

offered up to him with a sincere frame of mind, it would be morally good. The act in regard of the substance is the same in both, and considered as separated from the object to which the worship is directed, hath the same real goodness in regard of its substance; but when you consider this action in relation to the different objects, the one hath a moral goodness, and the other a moral evil. So in speaking; speaking being a motion of the tongue in the forming of words, is an excellency belonging to a reasonable creature; an endowment bestowed, continued, and supported by God. Now if the same tongue forms words whereby it curseth God this minute, and forms words whereby it blesses and praises God the next minute, the faculty of speaking is the same, the motion of the tongue is the same in pronouncing the name of God either in a way of cursing or blessing; it is the *same mouth that blesseth and curseth, James* 3. 9, 10; and the motion of it is naturally good in regard of the substance of the act in both; it is the use of an excellent power God hath given, and which God preserves in the use of it. But the estimation of the moral goodness or evil is not from the act itself, but from the disposition of the mind.

Once more, killing as an act is good, nor is it unlawful as an act; for if so, God would never have commanded his people Israel to wage any war, and justice could not be done upon malefactors by the magistrate. A man were bound to sacrifice his life to the fury of an invader, rather than secure it by dispatching that of an enemy. But killing an innocent, or killing without authority, or out of revenge, is bad. It is not the material part of the act, but the object, manner, and circumstance, that makes it good or evil. It is no blemish to God's holiness to concur to the substance of an action, without having any hand in the immorality of it, because whatsoever is real in the substance of the action, might be done without evil. It is not evil as it is an act, as it is a motion of the tongue or hand, for then every motion of the tongue or hand would be evil.

2. Hence it follows, that an *act as an act is one thing,*

*and the viciousness another.** The action is the efficacy of the faculty, extending itself to some outward object; but the sinfulness of an act consists in a privation of that comeliness and righteousness, which ought to be in an action; in a want of conformity of the act with the law of God, either written in nature or revealed in the word. Now the sinfulness of an action is not the act itself, but is considered in it as it is related to the law, and is a deviation from it; and so it is something cleaving to the action, and therefore to be distinguished from the act itself, which is the subject of the sinfulness. When we say, such an action is sinful, the action is the subject, and the sinfulness of the action is that which adheres to it. The action is not the sinfulness, nor the sinfulness the action; they are distinguished as the member, and a disease in the member, the arm and the palsy in it. The arm is not the palsy, nor is the palsy the arm, but the palsy is a disease that cleaves to the arm: so sinfulness is a deformity that cleaves to an action.

The evil of an action is not the effect of an action, nor attends it as it is an action, but as it is an action so circumstantiated, and conversant about this or that object; for the same action done by two several persons, may be good in one and bad in the other. As when two judges are in joint commission for the trial of a malefactor, both upon the appearance of his guilt condemn him. This action in both, considered as an action, is good; for it is an adjudging a man to death whose crime deserves such a punishment. But this same act, which is but one joint act of both, may be morally good in one judge, and morally evil in the other; morally good in him that condemns him out of an unbiassed consideration of the demerit of his fact, obedience to the law, and conscience of the duty of his place; and morally evil in the other, who hath no respect to those considerations, but joins in the act of condemnation, principally moved by some private animosity against the prisoner, and desire of revenge for some injury he hath

* Amyrald. p. 321, 322.

really received, or imagines that he hath received from him. The act in itself is the same materially in both; but in one it is an act of justice, and in the other an act of murder, as it respects the principles and motives of it in the two judges; take away the respect of private revenge, and the action in the unjust judge had been as laudable as the action of the other. The substance of an act, and the sinfulness of an act, are separable and distinguishable; and God may concur with the substance of an act, without concurring with the sinfulness of the act. As the good judge, that condemned the prisoner out of conscience, concurred with the wicked judge, who condemned the prisoner out of private revenge; not in the principle and motive of condemnation, but in the material part of condemnation. So God assists in that action of a man wherein sin is placed, but not in that which is the formal reason of sin, which is a privation of some perfection the action ought morally to have.

3. It will appear further in this, that hence it follows, that the action and the viciousness of the action may have *two distinct causes.* That may be a cause of the one that is not the cause of the other, and hath no hand in the producing of it. God concurs to the act of the mind as it counsels, and to the external action upon that counsel, as he preserves the faculty, and gives strength to the mind to consult, and the other parts to execute; yet he is not in the least tainted with the viciousness of the action. Though the action be from God as a concurrent cause, yet the ill quality of the action is solely from the creature with whom God concurs. The sun and the earth concur to the production of all the plants that are formed in the womb of the one, and produced by the other. The sun distributes heat, and the earth communicates sap; it is the same heat dispersed by the one, and the same juice bestowed by the other: it hath not a sweet juice for one, and a sour juice for another.

This general influx of the sun and earth is not the immediate cause that one plant is poisonous, and another wholesome; but the sap of the earth is turned by the nature and quality of each plant. If there were not such

an influx of the sun and earth, no plant could exert that poison which is in its nature; but yet the sun and earth are not the cause of that poison which is in the nature of the plant. If God did not concur to the motions of men, there could be no sinful action, because there could be no action at all; yet this concurrence is not the cause of that venom that is in the action, which ariseth from the corrupt nature of the creature, no more than the sun and earth are the cause of the poison of the plant, which is purely the effect of its own nature upon that general influx of the sun and earth. The influence of God pierces through all subjects; but the action of man done by that influence is vitiated according to the nature of its own corruption. As the sun equally shines through all the quarrels in the window; if the glass be bright and clear, there is a pure splendour; if it be red or green the splendour is from the sun, but the discolouring of that light upon the wall is from the quality of the glass.

* But to be yet plainer; the soul is the image of God, and by the acts of the soul we may come to the knowledge of the acts of God; the soul gives motion to the body, and every member of it, and no member could move without a concurrent virtue of the soul; if a member be paralytic or gouty, whatsoever motion that gouty member hath, is derived to it from the soul; but the goutiness of the member was not the act of the soul, but the fruit of ill humours in the body; the lameness of the member, and the motion of the member have two distinct causes, the motion is from one cause and the ill motion from another. As the member could not move irregularly without some ill humour or cause of that distemper; so it could not move at all without the activity of the soul; so though God concur to the act of understanding, willing, and execution, why can he not be as free from the irregularity in all those, as the soul is free from the irregularity of the motion of the body, while it is the cause of the motion itself. There are two illustrations generally used in this case, that are not unfit; the

* Zanch. tom. 2. lib. 3. cap. 4. qu. 4. p. 226.

motion of the pen in writing is from the hand that holds it, but the blurs of the pen are from some fault in the pen itself. And the music of the instrument is from the hand that touches it, but the jarring from the faultiness of the strings; both are the causes of the motion of the pen and strings, but not the blurs or jarrings.

4. It is very congruous to the wisdom of God to move his creatures according to their particular natures; but *this motion makes him not the cause of sin.* Had our innocent nature continued, God had moved us according to that innocent nature; but when that state was changed for a corrupt one, God must either forbear all concourse, and so annihilate the world, or move us according to that nature he finds in us. If he had overthrown the world upon the entrance of sin, and created another upon the same terms, sin might have as soon defaced his second work as he did the first; and then it would follow, that God would have been always building and demolishing. It was not fit for God to cease from acting as a wise governor of his creature, because man ceased from his loyalty as a subject. Is it not more agreeable to God's wisdom as a governor, to concur with his creature according to his nature, than to deny his concurrence upon every evil determination of the creature? God concurred with Adam's mutable nature in his first act of sin; he concurred to the act and left him to his mutability. If Adam had put out his hand to eat of any other unforbidden fruit, God would have supported his natural faculty then, and concurred with him in his motion.

When Adam would put out his hand to take the forbidden fruit, God concurred to that natural action; but left him to the choice of the object, and to the use of his mutable nature. And when man became apostate, God concurs with him according to that condition wherein he found him, and cannot move him otherwise, unless he should alter that nature man had contracted. God moving the creature as he found him is no cause of the ill motion of the creature; as when a wheel is broken the space of a foot, it cannot but move ill in that part till it be mended. He that moves it, uses the same motion, as it is his act,

which he would have done had the wheel been sound; the motion is good in the mover, but bad in the subject. It is not the fault of him that moves it, but the fault of that wheel that is moved, whose breaches came by some other cause. A man does not use to lay aside his watch for some irregularity, as long as it is capable of motion, but winds it up. Why should God cease from concurring with his creature in its vital operations and other actions of his will, because there was a flaw contracted in that nature, that came perfect out of his hand? And as he that winds up his disordered watch, is in the same manner the cause of its motion then, as he was when it was regular; yet by that act of his, he is not the cause of the false motion of it, but that is from the deficiency of some part of the watch itself. So though God concurs to that action of the creature, whereby the wickedness of the heart is drawn out; yet is not God therefore as unholy as the heart.

5. God hath *one end in his concurrence*, and man *another in his action*. So that there is a righteous, and often a gracious end in God, when there is a base and unworthy end in man. God concurs to the substance of the act; man produces the circumstance of the act, whereby it is evil. God orders both the action wherein he concurs, and the sinfulness over which he presides, as a governor, to his own ends. In Joseph's case, man was sinful, and God merciful; his brethren acted enviously, and God designed mercy, *Gen.* 45. 4, 5. They would be rid of him as an eyesore, and God concurred with their action to make him their preserver, *Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good*, *Gen.* 50. 20. God concurred in the action of Judas betraying our Saviour; he supported his nature while he contracted with the priests, and supported his members while he was their guide to apprehend him: God's end was the manifestation of his choicest love to man, and the end of Judas was the gratification of his own covetousness. The Assyrian did a divine work against Jerusalem, but not with a divine end, *Isa.* 10. 5, 6, 7. He had a mind to enlarge his empire, enrich his coffers with the

spoil, and gain the title of a conqueror; he is desirous to invade his neighbours, and God employs him to punish his rebels; but *he means not so, nor doth his heart think so;* he intended not as God intended. The axe doth not think what the carpenter intends to do with it. But God used the rapine of an ambitious nature as an instrument of his justice; as the exposing malefactors to wild beasts was an ancient punishment, whereby the magistrate intended the execution of justice, and to that purpose used the natural fierceness of the beasts to an end different from what those ravaging creatures aimed at.

God concurred with Satan in spoiling Job of his goods, and scarifying his body, *Job* 1. 12, 21; he gave Satan license to do it, and Job acknowledges it to be his act: but their ends were different; God concurred with Satan for the clearing the integrity of his servant, when Satan aimed at nothing but provoking him to curse his Creator. The physician applies leeches to suck the superfluous blood, but the leeches suck to glut themselves, without any regard to the intention of the physician, and the welfare of the patient. In the same act where men intend to hurt, God intends to correct; so that his concurrence is in a holy manner, while men commit unrighteous actions. A judge commands the executioner to execute the sentence of death which he hath justly pronounced against a malefactor, and admonishes him to do it out of love to justice; the executioner hath the authority of the judge for his commission, and the protection of the judge for his security; the judge stands by to countenance and secure him in the doing it; but if the executioner hath not the same intention as the judge, viz. a love to justice in the performance of his office, but a private hatred to the offender; the judge, though he commanded the fact of the executioner, yet did not command this error of his in it; and though he protects him in the fact, yet he owns not this corrupt disposition in him in the doing what was enjoined him, as any act of his own.

To conclude, since the creature cannot act without God, cannot lift up a hand or move his tongue, without

God's preserving and upholding the faculty and preserving the power of action, and preserving every member of the body in its actual motion, and in every circumstance of its motion, we must necessarily suppose God to have such a way of concurrence as does not intrench upon his holiness. We must not equal the creature to God, by denying its dependence on him; nor must we imagine such a concurrence to the sinfulness of an act, as stains the divine purity, which is, I think, sufficiently solved by distinguishing the matter of the act from the evil adhering to it; for since all evil is founded in some good, the evil is distinguishable from the good, and the deformity of the action from the action itself, which as it is a *created* act, hath a dependence on the will and influence of God; and as it is a *sinful* act, is the product of the will of the creature.

Proposition VI. The holiness of God is not blemished by *proposing objects to a man, which he makes use of to sin.* There is no object proposed to man, but is directed by the providence of God, which influences all motions in the world; and there is no object proposed to man, but his active nature may, according to the goodness or badness of his disposition, make a good or an ill use of. That two men, one of a charitable, the other of a hard hearted disposition, meet with an indigent and necessitous object, is from the providence of God, yet this indigent person is relieved by the one, and neglected by the other. There could be no action in the world, but about some object; there could be no object offered to us but by divine providence; the active nature of man would be in vain, if there were not objects about which it might be exercised. Nothing could present itself to man as an object, either to excite his grace, or awaken his corruption, but by the conduct of the governor of the world. That David should walk upon the battlements of his palace, and Bathsheba be in the bath at the same time, was from the divine providence which orders all the affairs of the world; and so some understand, *Thus saith the Lord, I will lay stumbling blocks before this people, and the fathers and sons together shall fall*

upon them, Jer. 6. 21: since they have offered sacrifices without those due qualifications in their hearts which were necessary to render them acceptable to me, I will lay in their way such objects, which their corruption will use to their further sin and ruin; so *He turned their heart to hate his people, Psal.* 105. 25; that is, by the multiplying his people, he gave occasion to the Egyptians of hating them, instead of caressing them as they had formerly done.

But God's holiness is not blemished by this; for 1. This proposing or presenting of objects invades not *the liberty of any man;* the tree of the knowledge of good and evil set in the midst of the garden of Eden, had no violent influence on man to force him to eat of it; his liberty to eat of it, or not, was reserved entire to himself; no such charge can be brought against any object whatsoever. If a man meet accidentally at a table with meat that is grateful to his palate, but hurtful to the present temper of his body; does the presenting this sort of food to him strip him of his liberty to decline it, as well as to feed on it? Can the food have any internal influence upon his will, and lay the freedom of it asleep whether he will or no? Is there any charm in that, more than in other sorts of diet? No; but it is the habit of love which he hath to that particular dish, the curiosity of his fancy, and the strength of his own appetite, whereby he is brought into a kind of slavery to that particular meat, and not any thing in the food itself. When the word is proposed to two persons, it is embraced by the one, rejected by the other; is it from the word itself, which is the object that these two persons perform different acts? The object is the same to both, but the manner of acting about the object, is not the same; is there any invasion of their liberty by it? Is the one forced by the word to receive it, and the other to reject it? Two such contrary effects cannot proceed from one and the same cause; outward things have only an objective influence, not an inward. *If the mere

* Amyral. de libero arbit. p. 224.

proposal of things did suspend or strike down the liberty of man, no angels in heaven, no man upon earth, no not our Saviour himself, could do any thing freely, but by force; objects that are ill used are of God's creation, and though they have allurements in them, yet they have no compulsive power over the will. The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was pleasing to the sight; it had a quality to allure, there had not else needed a prohibition to bar the eating of it; but it could not have so much power to allure as the divine threatening to deter.

2. The objects are good in themselves, but the ill use of them is *from man's corruption.* Bathsheba was by God's providence presented to David's sight, but it was David's disposition moved him to so evil an act; what if God knew that he would use that object ill? yet he knew he had given him a power to refrain from any ill use of it; the objects are innocent, but our corruption poisons them. The same object hath been used by one to holy purposes and holy improvements, that hath been used by another to sinful ends; when a charitable object is presented to a good man and a cruel man, one relieves him, the other reviles him; the object was rather an occasion to draw out the charity of one, as well as the other; but the refusing to reach out a helping hand, was not from the person in calamity, but the disposition of the refuser to whom he was presented; it is not from the nature of the object that men do good or evil, but from the disposition of the person, what is good in itself, is made bad by our corruption. As the same meat which nourishes and strengthens a sound constitution, cherishes the disease of another that eats at the same table, not from any unwholesome quality in the food, but the vicious quality of the humours lodging in the stomach, which turn the diet into fuel for themselves, which in its own nature was apt to engender a wholesome juice. Some are perfected by the same things whereby others are ruined. Riches are used by some, not only for their own, but the advantage of others in the world; by others only for themselves, and scarcely so much as their necessities require. Is this the

fault of the wealth, or the dispositions of the persons who are covetous instead of being generous? It is a calumny therefore upon God to charge him with the sin of man upon this account: the rain that drops from the clouds upon the plants, is sweet in itself, but when it moistens the root of any venomous plant, it is turned into the juice of the plant, and becomes venomous with it. The miracles that our Saviour wrought, were applauded by some and envied by the Pharisees; the sin arose not from the nature of the miracles, but the malice of their spirits; the miracles were fitter in their own nature to have induced them to adoration of our Saviour, than to excite so vile a passion against one that had so many marks from heaven to dignify him, and proclaim him worthy of their respect. The person of Christ was an object proposed to the Jews; some worship him, others condemn and crucify him according to their several vices and base ends. Judas to content his covetousness, the Pharisees to glut their revenge, Pilate for his ambition, to preserve himself in his government, and avoid the charge of countenancing an enemy to Cæsar.* God at that time put into their minds a rational and true proposition which they apply to ill purposes. Caiaphas said, that *it was expedient for one man to die for the people*, which he *spake not of himself*, *John* 11. 50, 51. God put it into his mind, but he might have applied it better than he did, and considered, though the maxim was commendable, whether it might justly be applied to Christ, or whether there was such a necessity that he must die, or the nation be destroyed by the Romans; the maxim was sound and holy, decreed by God; but what an ill use did the High-Priest make of it to put Christ to death as a seditious person, to save the nation from the Roman fury?

3. Since the natural corruption of men will use such objects ill, *may not God* without tainting himself, *present such objects to them in subserviency to his gracious decrees?* Whatsoever God should present to men in that state, they would make an ill use of; hath not God then

* Amyrald. Ironic. p. 337.

the sovereign prerogative to present what he pleases, and suppress others? To offer that to them which may serve his holy purpose, and hide other things from them which are not so conducing to his gracious ends, which would be as much the occasions of exciting their sin, as the others which he brings forth to their view? The Jews at the time of Christ, were of a turbulent and seditious humour; they expected a Messiah, a temporal king, and would readily have embraced any occasion to have been up in arms to have delivered themselves from the Roman yoke; to this purpose the people attempted once to make him king: and probably the expectation they had that he had such a design to head them, might be one reason of their *hosannas*, because without such conceit it was not probable they should vote him to the cross in so short a time, after they had applauded him as if he had been upon a throne; but their being defeated in their strong expectations, usually ended in more ardent fury.

This turbulent and seditious humour God directs in another channel, suppresses all occurrences that might excite them to rebellion against the Romans, which if he had given way to, the crucifying Christ, which God designed to bring about at that time, had not probably been effected, and the salvation of mankind had been prevented for a time. God therefore orders such objects and occasions, that might direct this seditious humour to another channel, which would else have run out in other actions, which had not been conducing to the great design to be accomplished in the world. Is it not the right of God, and without any blemish to his holiness, to use those corruptions which he finds sown in the nature of his creature by the hand of Satan, and to propose such objects as may excite the exercise of them for his own service? Surely God hath as much right to serve himself of the creature of his own framing, and what natures soever they are possessed with, and to present objects to that purpose, as a falconer to offer this or that bird to his hawk to exercise his courage, and excite his ravenous appetite, without being termed the author of that appetite. God planted not those corruptions in the Jews,

but finds them in those persons over whom he hath an absolute sovereignty in the right of a Creator, and that of a Judge for their sins: and by the right of that sovereignty may offer such objects and occasions, which, though innocent in themselves, he knows they will make use of to ill purposes, but which by the same decree that he resolves to present such occasions to them, he also resolves to make use of them for his own glory.

It is not conceivable by us what way that death of Christ, which was necessary for the satisfaction of divine justice, could be brought about without ordering the evil of some men's hearts by special occasions to effect his purpose; we cannot suppose that Christ can be guilty of any crime that deserved death by the Jewish law; had he been so criminal, he could not have been a Redeemer: a perfect innocence was necessary to the design of his coming. Had God himself put him to that death, without using instruments of wickedness in it, by some remarkable hand from heaven, the innocence of his nature had been for ever eclipsed, and the voluntariness of his sacrifice had been obscured: the strangeness of such a judgment would have made his innocence incredible; he could not reasonably have been proposed as an object of faith: What, to believe in one that was struck dead by a hand from heaven! The propagation of the doctrine of redemption had then wanted a foundation; and though God might have raised him again, the certainty of his death had been as questionable as his innocence in dying, had he not been raised.

But God orders every thing so, as to answer his own most wise and holy ends, and maintain his truth, and the fulfilling the predictions of his word, in the minutest concerns about them, and all this by presenting occasions innocent in themselves: which the corruptions of the Jews took hold of, and whereby God, unknown to them, brought about his own decrees. And may not this be conceived without any stain upon God's holiness; for when there are the seeds of all sin in man's nature, why may not God hinder the sprouting up of this or that kind of seed, and leave liberty to the growth of the other, and

shut up other ways of sinning, and restrain men from them, and let them loose to that temptation by which he intends to serve himself, hiding from them those objects which were not so serviceable to his purpose, wherein they would have sinned, and offer others, which he knew their corruption would use ill, and were serviceable to his ends; since the depravation of their natures would necessarily hurry them to evil without restraining grace, as a scale will necessarily rise up when the weight in it, which kept it down, is taken away?

Proposition VII. The holiness of God is not blemished by *withdrawing his grace* from a sinful creature, whereby he *falls into more sin.* That God withdraws his grace from men, and gives them up sometimes to the fury of their lusts, is as clear in scripture as any thing; *Yet the Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, &c. Deut.* 29. 4. Judas was delivered to Satan after the sop; and put into his power for despising former admonitions. He often leaves the reins to the devil, that he may use what efficacy he can in those that have offended the majesty of God; he withholds further influences of grace, or withdraws what before he had granted them; Thus he withheld that grace from the sons of Eli, that might have made their father's pious admonitions effectual to them; *They hearkened not to the voice of their Father, because the Lord would slay them,* 1 *Sam.* 2. 25. He gave grace to Eli to reprove them, and withheld that grace from them, which might have enabled them against their natural corruption and obstinacy to receive that reproof.

But the holiness of God is not blemished by this,—1. Because the act of God in this is *only negative.* * Thus God is said to harden men: not by positive hardening, or working any thing in the creature, but by not working, not softening, leaving a man to the hardness of his own heart, whereby it is unavoidable by the depravation of man's nature, and the fury of his passions, but that he should be further hardened, and *increase unto*

* Testard. de natur. & grat. Thes. 150, 151. Amy. on divers Texts, p. 311.

more ungodliness, as the expression is 2 *Tim.* 2. 16. As a man is said to give another his life, when he doth not take it away when it lay at his mercy; so God is said to harden a man, when he does not mollify him when it was in his power, and inwardly quicken him with that grace, whereby he might infallibly avoid further provoking him. God is said to harden men, when he removes not from them the incentives to sin, curbs not those principles which are ready to comply with those incentives, withdraws the common assistances of his grace, concurs not with counsels and admonitions to make them effectual; and communicates not the convincing light which he did before. If hardness follows upon God's withholding his softening grace, it is not by any positive act of God, but from the natural hardness of man.

If you put fire near to wax or rosin, both will melt, but when that fire is removed, they return to their natural quality of hardness and brittleness; the positive act of the fire is to melt and soften, and the softness of the rosin is to be ascribed to that, but the hardness is from the rosin itself, wherein the fire hath no influence, but only a negative act by a removal of it: so when God hardens a man, he only leaves him to that stony heart which he derived from Adam, and brought with him into the world. All men's understandings being blinded, and their wills perverted in Adam, God's withdrawing his grace, is but a leaving them to their natural pravity, which is the cause of their further sinning, and not God's removal of that special light he before afforded them, or restraint he held over them. As when God withdraws his preserving power from the creature, he is not the efficient, but deficient cause of the creature's destruction; so in this case, God only ceases to bind and restrain that sin which else would break out.

2. The whole *positive cause* of this hardness is from *man's corruption.* God infuseth not any sin into his creatures, but forbears to infuse his grace and restrain their lusts, which upon the removal of his grace work impetuously: God only gives them up to that, which he knows will work strongly in their hearts. And therefore

the apostle wipes off from God any positive act in that uncleanness the heathens were given up to, by adding *through the lusts of their own hearts*, *Rom.* 1. 24. They were the lusts of *their own hearts*, not of God's inspiring. His giving them up was the logical cause, or a cause by way of argument; their own lusts were the true and natural cause; their own they were before they were given up to them; and belonging to none as the author, but themselves, after they were given up to them. The lust in the heart, and the temptation without, easily close and mix interests with one another. As the fire in a coal-pit will with the fuel, if the streams derived into it for the quenching it, be damped up: the natural passions will run to a temptation as the waters of a river roll towards the sea.

When a man that hath bridled in a high-metled horse, gives him the reins; or a huntsman takes off the string that held the dog, and lets him run after the hare; are they the immediate cause of the motion of the one, or the other? no, but the mettle and strength of the horse, and the natural inclination of the hound, both which are left to their own motions to pursue their own natural instincts. Man as naturally tends to sin as a stone to the centre, or as a weighty thing inclines in motion to the earth: It is from the propension of man's nature that he *drinks up iniquity like water;* and God does no more when he leaves a man to sin, by taking away the hedge which stopped him, but leave him to his natural inclination. As a man that breaks up a dam he hath placed, leaves the streams to run in their natural channel; or one that takes away a prop from a stone to let it fall, leaves it only to that nature which inclines it to a descent; both have their motion from their own nature, and man his sin from his own corruption.* The withdrawing the sun-beams is not the cause of darkness, but the shadow of the earth; nor is the departure of the sun the cause of winter, but the coldness of the air and earth, which was tempered and beaten back into the bowels of the earth by the vigour of

* Amyrald. de predest. p. 107.

the sun, upon whose departure they return to their natural state: the sun only leaves the earth and air as it found them at the beginning of the spring, or the beginning of the day.

If God do not give a man grace to melt him, yet he cannot be said to communicate to him that nature which hardens him, which man hath from himself. As God was not the cause of the first sin of Adam, which was the root of all others, so he is not the cause of the following sins, which as branches spring from that root; man's free-will was the cause of the first sin, and the corruption of his nature by it the cause of all succeeding sins. God does not immediately harden any man, but proposes those things, from whence the natural vice of man takes an occasion to strengthen and nourish itself: hence, God is said to *harden Pharaoh's heart*, *Exod.* 7. 13, by concurring with the magicians in turning their rods into serpents, which hardened his heart against Moses, conceiving him by reason of that to have no more power than other men, and was an occasion of his further hardening. And Pharaoh is said to harden himself, that is, in regard of his own natural passion, *Exod.* 8. 32.

3. God is holy and righteous, because he does not withdraw from man, *till man deserts him:* to say that God withdrew that grace from Adam, which he had afforded him in creation, or any thing that was due to him, till he had abused the gifts of God, and turned them to an end contrary to that of creation, would be a reflection upon the divine holiness: God was first deserted by man before man was deserted by God; and man first contemns and abuses the common grace of God, and those reliques of natural light that *enlighten every man that comes into the world*, before God leaves him to the hurry of his own passions. Ephraim was first joined to idols, before God pronounced the fatal sentence, *Let him alone*, *Hos.* 4. 17. And the heathens first *changed the glory of the incorruptible God*, before God withdrew his common grace from the corrupted creature; and they first served the creature more than the Creator, before the Creator gave them up to the slavish chains of their

vile affections, *Rom.* 1. 23, 24, 25, 26. Israel first cast off God before God cast off them, but then *he gave them up to their own heart's lusts, and they walked in their own counsels, Psal.* 81. 11, 12.

Since sin entered into the world by the fall of Adam, and the blood of all his posterity was tainted, man cannot do any thing that is formally good; not for want of faculties, but for the want of a righteous habit in those faculties, especially in the will; yet God discovers himself to man in the works of his hands; he hath left in him footsteps of natural reason, he attends him with common motions of his Spirit, and corrects him for his faults with gentle chastisements. He is near unto all in some kind of instructions: he puts many times providential bars in their way of sinning; but when they will rush into it as the *horse into the battle*, when they will rebel against the light, God often leaves them to their own course, and sentences him that is *filthy to be filthy still, Rev.* 22. 11, which is a righteous act of God, as he is rector and governor of the world. Man's not receiving, or not improving what God gives, is the cause of his not giving further, or taking away his own, which before he had bestowed. This is so far from being repugnant to the holiness and righteousness of God, that it is rather a commendable act of his holiness and righteousness, as the rector of the world, not to let those gifts continue in the hand of a man who abuses them contrary to his glory.

Who will blame a father, that after all the good counsels he hath given his son to reclaim him, all the corrections he hath inflicted on him for his irregular practices, leaves him to his own courses and withdraws those assistances which he scoffed at and turned the deaf ear unto? Or who will blame the physician for deserting the patient, who rejects his counsel, will not follow his prescriptions, and who at the same time treats him with insolence! No man will blame him, no man will say that he is the cause of the patient's death, but the true cause is the fury of the distemper, and the obstinacy of the diseased person, to which the physician left him. And who can justly

blame God in this case, who yet never denied supplies of grace to any that sincerely sought it at his hands; and what man is there that lies under hardness of heart, but first was guilty of very provoking sins? What unholiness is it to deprive men of those assistances because of their sin, and afterwards to direct those counsels and practices of theirs to which he hath justly given them up, to serve the ends of his own glory in his own methods?

4. Which will appear further by considering, that God is not *obliged* to continue his grace to them. It was at his liberty whether he could give any renewing grace to Adam after his Fall, or to any of his posterity: he was at his own liberty to withhold it or communicate it: but if he were under any obligation then, surely he must be under less now, since the multiplication of sin by his creatures: but if the obligation were none just after the Fall, there is no pretence now to fasten any such obligation on God. That God had no obligation at first hath been spoken to before: he is less obliged to continue his grace after a repeated refusal, and a peremptory abuse, than he was bound to proffer it after the first apostacy. God can not be charged with unholiness in withdrawing his grace after we have received it, unless we can make it appear that his grace was a thing due to us, as we are his creatures, and as he is governor of the world. What prince looks upon himself as obliged to reside in any particular place of his kingdom? But suppose he were bound to inhabit in one particular city, yet after the city rebels against him, is he bound to continue his court there, spend his revenue among rebels, endanger his own honour and security, enlarge their charter, or maintain their ancient privileges? Is it not most just and righteous for him to withdraw himself and leave them to their own tumultuousness and sedition, whereby they should *eat the fruit of their own doings?* If there be an obligation on God as a governor, it would rather stand on the side of justice, to leave man to the power of Satan whom he courted, and the prevalency of those lusts he hath so often caressed, and wrap up in a cloud all his common illuminations, and leave him destitute of all common workings of his Spirit.

Proposition VIII. God's holiness is not blemished by his *commanding those things sometimes which seem to be against nature*, or *thwart some other of his precepts.* As when God commanded Abraham with his own hand to sacrifice his son, there was nothing of unrighteousness in it, *Gen.* 22. 2. God hath a sovereign dominion over the lives and beings of his creatures, whereby as he creates one day, he might annihilate the next; and by the same right that he might demand the life of Isaac as being his creature, he might demand the obedience of Abraham in a ready return of that to him, which he had so long enjoyed by his grant. It is true, killing is unjust when it is done without cause, and by a private authority: but the authority of God surmounts all private and public authority whatsoever. Our lives are due to him when he calls for them, and they are more than once forfeited to him by reason of transgression. But however the case is, God commanded him to do it for the trial of his grace, but suffered him not to do it in favour to his ready obedience: but had Isaac been actually slain and offered, how had it been unrighteous in God, who enacts laws for the regulation of his creature, but never intended them to the prejudice of the rights of his sovereignty?

Another case is that of the Israelites borrowing jewels of the Egyptians by the order of God, *Exod.* 11. 2, 3, and 12. 36. Is not he Lord of men's goods, as well as their lives? What have any, they have not received? and that not as proprietors independent on God, but his stewards; and may not he demand a portion of his steward to bestow upon his favourite? He that had power to dispose of the Egyptian's goods, had power to order the Israelites to ask them. Besides, God acted the part of a just judge in ordering them their wages for their service in this method, and making their task-masters give them some recompence for their unjust oppression so many years: it was a command from God therefore, rather for the preservation of justice, (the basis of all those laws which unite human society) than any infringement of it. It was a material recompence in part, though not a formal one in the intention of the Egyptians; it was but in part a

recompence; it must needs come short of the damage the poor captives had sustained by the tyranny of their masters, who had enslaved them contrary to the rules of hospitality; and could not make amends for the lives of the poor infants of Israel, whom they had drowned in the river. He that might for the unjust oppression of his people have taken away all their lives, destroyed the whole nation, and put the Israelites into the possession of their lands, could, without any unrighteousness, dispose of part of their goods: and it was rather an act of clemency to leave them some part, who had doubly forfeited all.

Again the Egyptians were as ready to lend by God's influence, as the Israelites were to ask by God's order; and though it was a loan, God as sovereign of the world, and Lord of the earth and the fulness thereof, alienated the property by assuming them to the use of the tabernacle, to which service most, if not all of them, were afterwards dedicated. God who is law-giver hath power to dispense with his own law, and make use of his own goods and dispose of them as he pleases. It is no unholiness in God to dispose of that which he hath a right unto. Indeed God cannot command that which is in its own nature intrinsically evil; as to command a rational creature not to love him, not to worship him, to call God to witness to a lie; these are intrinsically evil; but for the disposing of the lives and goods of his creatures, which they have from him in right, and not in absolute propriety, is not evil in him, because there is no repugnancy in his own nature to such acts, nor is it any thing inconsistent with the natural duty of a creature, and in such cases he may use what instruments he please.

PART IV.

THE SUBJECT IMPROVED.

Frequent contempt of divine holiness—Various ways in which it is injured—The greatness of man's fall—All sin opposite to the nature of God—Sin cannot escape punishment—Necessity of a Mediator—No other medium of justification—Deity of Jesus—Government of the world—Divine origin of religion—Consolations derived from the holiness of God.

WE have now shewed the nature of this holiness in God, what it is, and we have demonstrated it, and proved that God is holy, and must needs be so; and also the purity of his nature in all his acts about sin: let us now improve the subject.

The FIRST use shall be of instruction and information. And, (1.) How great and *how frequent is the contempt* of this eminent perfection in the Deity? Since the Fall, this attribute, which renders God most amiable in himself, renders him most hateful to his apostate creature. It is impossible that he that loves iniquity, can effect that which is irreconcileably contrary to the iniquity he loves. Nothing so contrary to the sinfulness of man as the holiness of God, and nothing is thought of by the sinner with so much detestation. How do men account that which is the most glorious perfection of the divinity, unworthy to be regarded as an accomplishment of their own souls? And when they are pressed to an imitation

of it, and a detestation of what is contrary to it, have the same sentiments in their heart which Satan had in his language to Christ, why *art thou come to torment us before our time?*

What enmity the world naturally hath to this perfection, I think is visible in the practices of the heathen, who among all the heroes which they deified, elevated none to that dignity among them for this or that moral virtue that came nearest to it, but for their valour or some usefulness in the concerns of this life. Æsculapius was deified for his skill in the cure of diseases; Bacchus for the use of the grape; Vulcan for his operations by fire; Hercules for his destroying of tyrants and monsters; but none for their mere virtue; as if any thing of purity were unworthy of their consideration in the frame of a deity, when it is the glory of all other perfections; so essential it is, that when men reject the imitation of this, God regards it as a total rejection of himself, though they own all the other attributes of his nature, *Israel would none of me; Psal.* 81. 11; why? because *they walked not in his ways,* ver. 13, those ways wherein the purity of the divine nature was most conspicuous: they would own him in his power, when they stood in need of deliverance; they would own him in his mercy, when they were plunged in distress; but they would not imitate him in his holiness. This being the lustre of the divine nature, the contempt of it is obscuring all his other perfections, and casting dishonour upon his whole character. To own all the rest, and deny him this, is to frame him as an unbeautiful monster a deformed power. Indeed, all sin is against this attribute; all sin aims in general at the Being of God, but in particular at the holiness of his Being; all sin is a violence to this perfection.

There is not an iniquity in the world, but directs its venomous sting against the divine purity; some sins are directed against his omniscience as secret wickedness; some against his providence, as distrust; some against his mercy, as unbelief; some against his wisdom, as neglecting the means instituted by him, censuring his ways and actings; some against his power, as trusting in means

more than in God, and the immoderate fear of men more than of God; some against his truth, as distrusting his promise, or not fearing his threatening; but all agree together in their enmity against this, which is the peculiar glory of the deity, every one of them is a receding from the divine image; and the blackness of every one is the deeper, by how much the distance of it from the holiness of God is the greater. This contrariety to the holiness of God is the cause of all the absolute atheism, if there be any such, in the world; what was the reason the *fool hath said in his heart there is no God?* but because the fool is *corrupt, and hath done abominable works, Psal.* 14. 1. If they believe the being of a God, their own reason will force them to imagine him holy; therefore rather than fancy a holy God, they would fain fancy none at all.

1. The holiness of God is injured, in *unworthy representations of God*, and *imaginations* of him in our own minds. The heathen fell under this guilt, and ascribed to their idols those vices which their own sensuality inclined them to, unworthy of a man, much more unworthy of a God, that they might find the protection of their crimes in the practice of their idols. But is this only the notion of the heathens? May there not be many among us whose love to their lusts, and desires of sinning without controul, move them to slander God in their thoughts rather than reform their lives, and are ready to frame by the power of their imaginative faculty, a God not only winking, but smiling at their impurities? I am sure God charges the impieties of men upon this score, in *Psal.* 50. 21; which seems to be a representation of the day of judgment, as some gather from ver. 6. When God sums up all together, *these things hast thou done, and I kept silence, thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself;* not a detester, but an approver of thy crimes. And the Psalmist seems to express God's loathing of sin in such a manner, as intimates it to be contrary to the ideas and resemblances men make of him in their minds, *For thou art not a God that hast pleasure in wickedness. Psal.* 5. 4. As we say in vindication of a man, he is not such a man as you imagine him to be; thou art not such

a God as the world commonly imagines thee to be, a God taking pleasure in iniquity.

It is too common for men to fancy God not as he is, but as they would have him, and to rob him of his excellency for their own security. As God made man after his image, man would dress God after his own mode, as may best suit the content of his lusts, and encourage him in a course of sinning; for when they can frame such a notion of God, as if he were a countenancer of sin, they will derive from thence a reputation to their crimes, commit wickedness with an unbounded licentiousness, and crown their vices with the name of virtues, because they are so like to the sentiment of that God they fancy. From hence, as the Psalmist in the psalm before mentioned, arises that mass of vice which is in the world; such conceptions are the mother and nurse of all impiety; I question not but the first spring is some wrong notion of God in regard of his holiness. We are as apt to imagine God as we would have him, as the black Ethiopians were to draw the image of their gods after their own dark hue, and paint him with their own colour; as a philosopher in Theodoret speaks; if oxen and lions had hands, and could paint as men do, they would frame the images of their gods according to their own likeness and complexion; such notions of God render him a swinish being, and worse than the vilest idols adored by the Egyptians, when men fancy God indulgent to their appetites, and most sordid lusts.

2. In *defacing the image of God* in our souls. God in the first draught of man conformed him to his own image, or made him an image of himself: because we find that in regeneration this image is renewed; *The new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, Eph.* 4. 24. He did not take angels for his pattern in the first polishing the soul, but himself. In defacing this image we defile the holiness of God, which was his pattern in framing of us; and rather chuse to be conformed to Satan, who is God's grand enemy, to have God's image erased out of us, and Satan's substituted in its stead. Therefore natural men in an unregenerate state may justly be called devils; since our

Saviour called the worst man, Judas, so, and also Peter, one of the best.* And if this title be given by an infallible judge to one of the worst, and one of the best, it may without wrong to any be ascribed to all men that wallow in their sin, which is directly contrary to that illustrious image which God imprinted upon them.

How often is it seen that men controul the light of their own nature, and stain the clearest beams of that *candle of the Lord* in their own spirits, that fly in the face of their own consciences, and say to them, as Ahab to Micaiah, thou didst *never prophecy good to me;* thou didst never encourage me in those things that are pleasing to the flesh; and use it at the same rate as the wicked king did the prophet, imprison it in unrighteousness;† because it raises in them sometimes sentiments of the holiness of God, which it represents in the soul of man. How jolly are men when the exhalations of their sensitive part rise up to cloud the exactest principle of moral nature in their minds, and render the monstrous principles of the law of corruption more lively?

Whence arises the wickedness which has been committed with an open face in the world, and the applause that has been often given to the worst of villanies? Have we not known among ourselves, men to glory in their shame, and esteem that a most genteel accomplishment of man, which is the greatest blot upon his nature, and which if it were upon God, would render him no God, but an impure demon, so that to be a gentleman among us hath been the same as to be an incarnate fiend? and to be a man, was to be no better, but worse than a brute? Vile wretches! Is not this a contempt of divine holiness to kill that divine seed which lies languishing in the midst of corrupted nature; to cut up any sprouts of it as weeds unworthy to grow in their gardens, and cultivate that which is the seed of hell? prefer the rotten fruits of Sodom, marked with a divine curse, before those relics of the fruits of Eden, of God's own planting?

3. The holiness of God is injured in *charging our sin*

* John 6. 1. Mat, 16, 23. † Rom. 1. 18.

upon God. Nothing is more natural to men than to seek excuses for their sin, and transfer it from themselves to the next at hand; and rather than fail, shift it upon God himself; and if they can bring God into society with them in sin, they will hug themselves in security that God cannot punish that guilt, wherein he is a partner: Adam's children are not of a different disposition from Adam himself, who after he was arraigned and brought to his trial startles not at flinging his impurities in the face of God his Creator, and accuseth him as if he had given him the woman, not to be his help but his ruin; *And the man said, the woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat, Gen.* 3. 12. He never supplicates for pardon, nor seeks a remedy, but reflects his crime upon God; "Had I been alone, as I was first created, I had not eaten, but the woman whom I received as a special gift from thee, hath proved my tempter and my bane." When man could not be like God in knowledge, he endeavoured to make God like him in his crime; and when his ambition failed of equalizing himself with God, he with an insolence too common to corrupted nature, attempts, by the imputation of his sin, to equal the divinity with himself.

Some think Cain had the same sentiment in his answer to God's demand, where his brother was; *Am I my brother's keeper? Gen.* 2. 9. Art not thou the keeper and governor of the world, why didst thou not take care of him, and hinder my killing him, and drawing this guilt upon myself, and terror upon my conscience?" David was not behind, when after the murder of Uriah, he said *The sword devoureth one as well as another, Sam.* 2. 11, 25. Fathering that solely upon divine providence, which was his own wicked contrivance: though afterwards he is more ingenuous in clearing God, and charging himself, *Against thee, thee only have I sinned, Psal.* 51. 4; and he clears God in his judgment too. It is too common for the *foolishness of man to pervert his way,* and then *his heart frets against the Lord, Prov.* 19. 3. He studies mischief, runs on in the ways of sin, and when he hath conjured up troubles to himself by his own folly, he ex

cuseth himself, and with indignation charges God as the author both of his sin and misery, and sets his mouth against the heavens. It is a more horrible thing to accuse God as a principal or accessary in our guilt, than to conceive him to be a favourer of our iniquity.

4. The holiness of God is injured, when men *study arguments from the holy word of God* to colour and shelter their crimes. When men will seek for a shelter for their lies, as in the case of the midwives to preserve the children, or in that of Rahab to save the spies; as if because God rewarded their fidelity, he countenanced their sin. How often is scripture wrested to be a plea for unbecoming practices, that God in his word may be imagined a patron for their iniquity? It is not unknown that some have maintained their jollity and carousing from *That a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat and drink and be merry, Eccles.* 8. 11. And their gluttony from *That which goes into the belly defiles not a man, Matth.* 5, 11. The morals of the Jesuits are a transcript of this.

How often has the passion of our Saviour, the highest expression of God's holiness, been employed to stain it, and encourage the most debauched practices? Grace hath been turned into wantonness, and the abundance of grace been used as a blast to increase the flames of sin; as if God had no other aim in that work of redemption, but to discover himself more indulgent to our sensual appetites and by his severity with his son, become more gracious to our lusts; this is to feed the roots of hell with the dews of heaven, to make grace a pander for the abuse of it, and to employ the expressions of his holiness in his word to be a sword against the essential holiness of his nature; as if a man should draw an apology for his treason out of that law that was made to forbid, not to protect, his rebellion. Not the meanest instrument in the temple was to be alienated from the use it was by divine order appointed to, nor was it to be employed in any common use; and shall the word of God, which is the image of his holiness, be transferred by base interpretations to be an advocate for iniquity? Such an ill use of his word reflects upon that hand which imprinted those cha-

racters of purity and righteousness upon it; as the misinterpretation of the wholesome laws of a prince, made to discourage debauchery, reflects upon his righteousness and sincerity in enacting them.

5. The holiness of God is injured, when men will *put up petitions to God to favour them in a wicked design.* Such there are, and they are thus taxed by the apostle, *Ye ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts, James* 4. 3: who desired mercies from God, with an intent to make them instruments of sin, and weapons of unrighteousness; as it is reported of a thief, that he always prayed for the success of his robberies. It hath not been uncommon in the world to appoint fasts and prayers for success in wars manifestly unjust, and commenced upon breaches of faith. Many covetous men petition God to prosper them in their unjust gain; as if the blessed God sat in his pure majesty upon a throne of grace, to espouse unjust practices, and make iniquity prosperous. There are such as *offer sacrifice with an evil mind, Prov.* 21. 27, to barter with God for a divine blessing to prosper a wicked contrivance. How great a contempt of the holiness of God is this? How inexcusable would it be for a favourite to address himself to a just prince with this language? "Sire, I desire a boon of such lands that lie near me, for an addition to my estate, that I may have supports for my debauchery, and be able to play the villain more powerfully among my neighbours." Hereby he implies that his prince is a friend to such crimes and wickedness as he intends his petition for. Is not this the language of many men's hearts in the immediate presence of God? The order of prayer runs thus, *hallowed be thy name;* first to have a deep sense of the holiness of the divine nature, and an ardent desire for the glory of it: this order is inverted by asking those things which are not agreeable to the will of God; not meet for us to ask, nor meet for God to give; or asking things agreeable to the will of God, but with a wicked intention: this is, in effect, to desire God to divest himself of his holiness, and commit sacrilege upon his own nature to gratify our lusts.

6. The purity of God is contemned, in hating and *scoffing at the holiness* which is in a creature. Whoever looks upon the holiness of a creature as an unlovely thing, can have no good opinion of the amiableness of divine purity. Whosoever hates those qualities and graces that resemble God in any person, must needs contemn the original pattern, which is more eminent in God. If there be no comeliness in a creature's holiness, to render it grateful to us, we should say of God himself, were he visible among us, with those in the prophet, *There is no beauty in him that we should desire him, Isa. 53.* Holiness is beautiful in itself. If God be the most lovely being, that which is a likeness to him, so far as it resembles him, must needs be amiable, because it partakes of God; and therefore those that see no beauty in an inferior holiness, but contemn it because it is a purity above them, contemn God much more: he that hates that which is imperfect merely for that excellency which is in it, doth much more hate that which is perfect, without any mixture or stain.

Holiness being the glory of God, the peculiar title of the Deity, and from him derived to the nature of a creature; he that mocks this in a person, derides God himself; and when he cannot abuse the purity in the Deity, he will do it in his image. As rebels that cannot wrong the king in his person, will do it in his picture, and his subjects that are loyal to him: he that hates the picture of a man, hates the person represented by it much more; he that hates the beams, hates the sun; the holiness of a creature is but a beam from that infinite sun, a stream from that eternal fountain. Where there is a derision of the purity of any creature; there is a greater reflection upon God in that derision, as he is the author of it. If a mixed and stained holiness be more the subject of any man's scoffs than a great deal of sin, that person has a disposition more roundly to scoff at God himself should he appear in that unblemished and unspotted purity which infinitely shines in his nature. O! it is a dangerous thing to scoff and deride holiness in any person, though never so mean; for such deride and scoff at the most holy God.

7. The holiness of God is injured by our *unprepared addresses to him*, when like swine, we come into the presence of God with all our uncleanness steaming upon us. A holy God requires a holy worship: and if our best duties, being impure in every part, as performed by us, are unmeet for God; how much more unsuitable are dead and unholy duties to a living and immense holiness? Slight approaches and carnal frames speak us to have imaginations of God as of a slight and sottish being. This is worse than the heathens practised, who would purify their flesh before they sacrificed, and make some preparations in a seeming purity, before they would enter into their temples. God is so holy, that were our services as refined as those of angels, we could not present him with a service meet for his holy nature. *Josh.* 24. 19. We contemn then this perfection when we come before him without due preparation; as if God himself were of an impure nature, and did not deserve our purest thoughts in our applications to him; as if any blemished and polluted sacrifice were good enough for him, and his nature deserved no better.

When we excite not those elevated frames of spirit which are due to such a being; when we think to put him off with a lame and imperfect service, we worship him not according to the excellency of his nature, but put a slight upon his majestic sanctity; when we nourish in our duties those foolish imaginations which creep upon us; when we bring into, and continue our worldly debauched fancies in his presence, and our spirit and behaviour is such as a man would blush to be attended with in his visits to any person of respectability. To be conversing with sordid sensualities, when we are at the feet of an infinite God, sitting upon the throne of his holiness, is as much a contempt of him, as it would be of a prince, to bring a vessel full of noisome ingredients with us, when we come to present a petition to him clothed in his royal robes. Or as it would have been to God, if the high priest should have swept all the blood and defilement of the sacrifices from the foot of the altar into the Holy of holies, and heaped it up before the mercy

seat, where the presence of God dwelt between the cherubims, and afterwards shoveled it into the ark, to be lodged with Aaron's rod and the pot of manna.

8. God's holiness is slighted in *depending upon our imperfect services*, to bear us out before the tribunal of God. This is too ordinary; the Jews were often infected with it, who not well understanding the enormity of their transgressions, the interweaving of sin with their services, and the unspottedness of the divine purity, mingled an opinion of merit with their sacrifices, and thought by slaying a beast, and offering it upon God's altar, they had made a sufficient compensation to that holiness they had offended. Not to speak of many among the Romanists, who have the same notion, thinking to make satisfaction to God, by erecting an hospital, or endowing a church, as if this injured perfection could be contented with the dregs of their purses, and the offering of an unjust mammon, more likely to mind God of the injury they had done him, than contribute to the appeasing of him. But is it not too ordinary with miserable men, whose consciences accuse them of their crimes, to rely upon the mumbling of a few formal prayers, and in the strength of them to think to stand before the tremendous tribunal of God, and meet with a full discharge upon this account from any accusation this divine perfection can present against them? Nay, do not the best christians sometimes find a principle in them, that makes them stumble in their goings forth to Christ, and glorifying the holiness of God in that method which he hath appointed? Sometimes casting an eye at their grace, and keeping awhile to this or that duty, and gazing at the glory of the temple-building, while they should more admire the glorious presence that fills it.

What is all this but vilifying of the holiness of the divine nature, as though it would be well enough contented with our impurities and imperfections, because they look like a righteousness in our estimation? As though dross and dung, which are the titles the apostle gives to all the righteousness of a fallen creature, were valuable in the sight of God, and sufficient to render us

comely before him. It is a blasphemy against this attribute, to pretend that any thing so imperfect, so defiled as the best of our services are, can answer to that which is infinitely perfect, and be a ground of demanding eternal life; it is at best, to set up a gilded Dagon as a fit companion for the ark of his holiness; our own righteousness as a suitable mate for the righteousness of God: as if he had repented of the claim he made by the law to an exact conformity, and thrown off the holiness of his nature for the fondling of a corrupted creature.

Rude and foolish notions of the divine purity, are clearly evidenced by any confidence in any righteousness of our own, though never so splendid. It is a rendering the righteousness of God, as dull and obscure as that of men; a mere outside, as their own; as blind as the heathens pictured their Fortune, that knew as little how to discern the nature and value of the offerings made to her, as to distribute her gifts, as if it were all one to them, to have a dog or a lamb presented in sacrifice. As if God did not well understand his own nature, when he enacted so holy a law, and strengthened it with so severe a threatening; which must follow upon our conceit, that he will accept a righteousness lower than that, which bears some suitableness to the holiness of his own nature, and that of his law; and that he could easily be put off with a pretended and counterfeit service.

What are the services of the generality of men, but suppositions that they can bribe God to an indulgence of them in their sins, and by an oral sacrifice, cause him to divest himself of his hatred of their former iniquities, and countenance their following practices. As the harlot that would return fresh to her uncleanness, upon the confidence that her peace offerings had contented the righteousness of God, *Prov.* 7. 14. As though a small service could make him wink at our sins, and lay aside the glory of his nature; when alas, the best duties in the most gracious persons in this life, are but as the steams of a spiced dunghill, a composition of myrrh and impurity, since there are swarms of corruptions

in their nature, and secret sins from which they need cleansing.

9. It is a contemning the holiness of God, when *we charge the law of God with rigidness;* when we blame the law of God, because it shackles us, and prohibits our desired pleasures; and hate the law of God, as they did the prophets, because they did not *prophesy smooth things;* but called to them, to get them *out of the way, and turn aside out of the path, and cause the holy one of Israel to cease from before them, Isa.* 30. 10, 11. "Put us no more in mind of the holiness of God, and the holiness of his law: it is a troublesome thing for us to hear of it; let him be gone from us, since he will not countenance our vices, and indulge our crimes; we would rather hear there is no God, than you should tell us of a holy one." We are contrary to the law, when we wish it were not so exact; and therefore contrary to the holiness of God, which sets the stamp of exactness and righteousness upon it. We think him injurious to our liberty, when by his precept he thwarts our pleasure; we wish it of another frame, more mild, more suitable to our minds; it is the same, as if we should openly blame God for consulting with his own righteousness, and not with our humours, before he settled his law; that he should not have drawn it from the depths of his righteous nature, but squared it to accommodate our corruption.

This being the language of such complaints, is reproving God, because he would not be unholy, that we might be unrighteous with impunity. Had the divine law been suited to our corrupt state, God must have been unholy to have complied with his rebellious creature. To charge the law with rigidness, either in language or practice, is the highest contempt of God's holiness; for it is an implicit wish, that God were as defiled, polluted, and disorderly, as our corrupted selves.

10. The holiness of God is injured opinionatively, First, in the opinion of *venial sins.* The Romanists divide sins into *venial* and *mortal.* Mortal, are those

which deserve eternal death; venial, the lighter sort of sins, which rather deserve to be pardoned than punished; or if punished, not with an eternal, but temporal punishment. This opinion hath no foundation in, but is contrary to scripture. How can any sin be in its own nature venial, when *the* due *wages of every sin is death, Rom.* 6. 23, and he who *continues not in every thing that the law commands*, falls under a curse? *Gal.* 3. 10. It is a mean thought of the holiness and majesty of God to imagine, that any sin which is against an infinite majesty, and as infinite a purity both in the nature of God and the law of God, should not be considered as infinitely heinous. All sins are transgressions of the eternal law, and in every one the infinite holiness of God is some way slighted.

Again, the holiness of God is injured in the opinion of *works of supererogation.* That is, such works as are not commanded by God, which yet have such a dignity and worth in their own nature, that the performers of them do not only merit at God's hands for them selves, but fill up a treasure of merits for others that come short of fulfilling the precepts God hath enjoined. It is such a mean thought of God's holiness, that the Jews in all the charges brought against them in scripture, were never guilty of. And if you consider what pitiful things they are, which are within the compass of such works, you have sufficient reason to bewail the ignorance of man, and the low esteem he hath of so glorious a perfection. Whipping themselves often in a week, extraordinary watchings, fastings, macerating their bodies, &c. are pitiful things to give content to an infinite purity. As if the precept of God required only the inferior degrees of virtue, and the counsels the more high and excellent; as if the law of God, which the psalmist counts perfect, did not command all good, and forbid all evil; as if the holiness of God had forgotten itself in the framing the law, and made it a scanty and defective rule; and the righteousness of a creature were not only able to make an eternal righteousness, but surmount it.

As man would be at first as knowing as God, so some of his posterity would be more holy than God; set up a wisdom against the wisdom of God, and a purity above the divine purity. Adam was not so presumptuous, he intended no more than an equalling God in knowledge; but those would exceed him in righteousness, and not only presume to render a satisfaction for themselves to the holiness they have injured, but to make a purse for the supply of others that are indigent, that they may stand before the tribunal of God with a confidence in the imaginary righteousness of a creature. How horrible is it for those that come short of the law of God themselves, to think that they can have enough for a loan to their neighbours?

(2.) Information. How *great* is our fall from God, and how distant we are from him. View the holiness of God, and take a prospect of the nature of man, and be astonished to see a person created in the divine image, degenerated into the image of Satan, We are as far fallen from the holiness of God, which consists in a hatred of sin, as the lowest point of the earth is from the highest point of the heavens. The devil is not more fallen from the rectitude of his nature and likeness to God, than we are; and that we are not in the same condition with those apostate Spirits, is not from any thing in our nature, but from the mediation of Christ, upon which account God hath indulged in us a continuance of some remainders of that which Satan is wholly deprived of. We are departed from our original pattern; we were created to live the life of God, that is, a life of holiness; but now we are *alienated from the life of God,* and of a beautiful piece we are become deformed and defiled. We *work uncleanness with greediness,* according to our ability, as creatures; as God works holiness with affection and ardency, according to his infinity, as Creator. More distant we are from God by reason of sin, than the vilest creature is from the highest and most glorious angel. By forsaking our innocence, we departed from God as our original copy.

The apostle might well say, that by sin we are *come*

short of the glory of God, Rom. 3. 23. Interpreters trouble themselves much about that place, man is come short of the glory of God, that is, of the holiness of God, which is the glory of divine nature, and was pictured in the rational, innocent creature. By the glory of God, is meant the holiness of God; *Beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory,* 1 *Cor.* 3. 18; that is, the glory of God in the text, into the image of which we are changed; but the scripture speaks of no other image of God, but that of holiness; we are *come short of the glory of God;* of the holiness of God, which is the glory of God; and the image of it, which was the glory of man. By sin, which is particular in opposition to the purity of God, man was left many leagues behind any resemblance to God; he cast off that which was the glory of his nature, and was the only means of glorifying God as his Creator. The word ὑστερνται, the apostle uses, is very significant, *postponed* by sin an infinite distance from any imitation of God's holiness, or any appearance before him in a garb of nature pleasing to him. Let us lament our fall, and distance from God.

(3.) Information. All unholiness is vile and *opposite* to the nature of God. It is such a loathsome thing, that the purity of God's eye is averse from beholding it, *Hab.* 1. 3. It is not said there, that he *will not*, but he *cannot* look on evil; there cannot be any amicableness between God and sin, the natures of both are so directly and unchangeably contrary to one another. Holiness is the life of God, it endures as long as his life; he must be eternally averse from sin, he can live no longer than he lives in the hatred and loathing of it. If he should for one instant cease to hate it, he would cease to live. To be a holy God, is as essential to him as to be a living God; and he would not be a living, but a dead God, if he were in the least point of time an unholy God. He cannot look on sin without loathing it, he cannot look on sin but his heart rises against it; it must needs be most odious to him, as that which is against the

glory of his nature, and directly opposite to that which is the lustre of all his other perfections.

Sin is the *abominable thing which his soul hates, Jer.* 44. 4, the vilest terms imaginable are used to signify it; do you understand the loathsomeness of a miry swine, or the nauseousness of the vomit of a dog? These are emblems of sin, 2 *Pet.* 2. 22. Can you endure the steams of putrified carcases from an open sepulchre? *Rom.* 3. 23. Or is the sight of a body covered with leprosy grateful to you? So vile, so odious is sin in the sight of God. It is no light thing then to fly in the face of God, to break his eternal law, to dash both the tables in pieces, to trample the transcript of God's own nature under our feet, to cherish that which is inconsistent with his honour, to lift up our heels against the glory of his nature, to join issue with Satan to deprive him of existence. Sin in every part of it is an opposition to the holiness of God, and consequently an envying him a being and life, as well as a glory. If sin be such a thing, *ye that love the Lord, hate evil.*

(4.) Information. Sin cannot *escape due punishment.* A hatred of unrighteousness, and consequently a will to punish it, is as essential to God, as a love of righteousness. Since he is not as an heathen idol, but hath eyes to see, and purity to hate every iniquity, he will have an infinite justice to punish whatsoever is against infinite holiness. As he loves every thing that is amiable, so he loathes every thing that is filthy, and that constantly without any change; his whole nature is set against it, he abhors nothing but this. It is not the devil's knowledge or activity that his hatred is terminated in, but the malice and unholiness of his nature; it is this only is the object of his severity; it is in the recompence of this only, that there can be a manifestation of his justice.

Sin must be punished; for, 1. This detestation of sin must be *manifested.* How should we certainly know his loathing of it, if he did not manifest by some act how ungrateful it is to him? As his love to righteousness would not appear, without rewarding it; so his hatred

of iniquity would be as little evidenced, without punishing it; his justice is the great witness to his purity. The punishment therefore inflicted on the wicked shall be, in some respect, as great as the rewards bestowed upon the righteous. Since the hatred of sin is natural to God, it is as natural to him to shew one time or other his hatred of it. And since men have a conceit that God is like them in impurity, there is a necessity of some manifestation of himself to be infinitely distant from those conceits they have of him; *I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes, Psal.* 50. 21. He would else encourage the injuries done to his holiness, favour the extravagancies of the creature, and condemn, or at least slight, the righteousness both of his own nature and his sovereign law. What way is there for God to manifest this hatred, but by threatening the sinner? and what would this be but a vain affrightment, and how ridiculous to the sinner himself, if it were never to be put in execution. There is an indissoluble connection between his hatred of sin, and punishment of the offender, *The wicked his soul hates; upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone,* &c. *Psal.* 11. 5, 6. He cannot approve of it without denying himself, and a total impunity would be a degree of approbation.

The displeasure of God is eternal and irreconcileable against sin; for sin being absolutely contrary to his holy nature, he is eternally contrary to it. If there be not therefore a way to separate the sin from the sinner, the sinner must lie under the displeasure of God; no displeasure can be manifested, without some marks of it upon the person that lies under that displeasure, &c. The holiness of God will right itself of the wrongs done to it, and scatter the prophaners of it at the greatest distance from him, which is the greatest punishment that can be inflicted; to be removed far from the fountain of life is the worst of deaths; God can as soon lay aside his purity, as always forbear his displeasure against an impure person; it is all one not to hate it, and not to manifest his hatred of it.

2. As his holiness is natural and necessary, so is the

punishment of unholiness necessary to him. It is necessary that he should abominate sin, and therefore necessary he should discountenance it. The severities of God against sin are not vain terrors, they have their foundation in the righteousness of his nature; it is because he is a righteous and Holy God, that he *will not forgive our transgressions and sins*, *Josh.* 24. 19, that is, that he will punish them. The throne of his holiness is a *fiery flame*, *Dan.* 7. 9, there is both a pure light and a scorching heat. Whatsoever is contrary to the nature of God, will fall under the justice of God; he would else violate his own nature, deny his own perfection, seem to be out of love with his own glory. He does not hate it out of choice, but from the immutable propension of his nature; it is not so free an act of his will, as the creation of man and angels, which he might have forborn as well as effected.

As the detestation of sin results from the universal rectitude of his nature, so the punishment of sin follows upon that, as he is the righteous governor of the world: it is as much against his nature not to punish it, as it is against his nature not to loathe it; he would cease to be holy, if he ceased to hate it; and he would cease to hate it, if he ceased to punish it. Neither the obedience of our Saviour's life, nor the strength of his cries, could put a bar to the cup of his passion; God so hated sin, that when it was but imputed to his Son, without any commission of it, he would bring a hell upon his soul. Certainly, if God could have hated sin without punishing it, his Son had never felt the smart of his wrath: his love to his Son had been strong enough to have caused him to forbear, had not the holiness of his nature been stronger to move him to inflict a punishment according to the demerit of his sin. God cannot but be holy, therefore cannot but be just, because injustice is a part of unholiness.

3. Therefore there can be no *communion* between God and unholy spirits. How is it conceivable, that God should hate the sin, and cherish the sinner with all his filth in his bosom; that he should eternally detest the crime, and eternally fold the sinner in his arms? Can less be expected from the purity of his nature, than to

separate an impure soul, as long as it remains so? Can there be any delightful communion between those whose natures are contrary? Darkness and light may as soon unite, and become one nature; God and the devil may as soon enter into an eternal league and covenant together: for God to *have pleasure in wickedness*, and to admit *evil to dwell with him*, are things equally impossible to his nature; while he hates impurity, he cannot have communion with an impure person. It may as soon be expected, that God should hate himself, offer violence to his own nature, lay aside his purity as an abominable thing, and blot his own glory, as love an impure person, entertain him as his delight, and set him in the same heaven and happiness with himself, and his holy angels: he must needs loathe him, he must needs banish him from his presence, which is the greatest punishment. God's holiness and hatred of sin, necessarily infer the punishment of it.

(5.) Information. There is therefore a *necessity of the satisfaction of the holiness of God by some sufficient Mediator.* The divine purity could not meet with any acquiescence in all mankind after the Fall: sin was hated, the sinner would be ruined, unless some way were found out to repair the wrongs done to the holiness of God; either the sinner must be condemned for ever, or some satisfaction must be made, that the holiness of the divine nature might eternally appear in its full lustre. That it is essential to the nature of God to hate all unrighteousness, as that which is absolutely repugnant to his nature, none can question. That the justice of God is so essential to him, as that sin could not be pardoned without satisfaction, some do question; though this latter seems rationally to follow upon the former *. That holiness is essential to the nature of God is evident, because else God may as much be conceived without purity, as he might be conceived without the creating the sun or stars. No man in his right mind can frame a correct notion of a Deity, without purity. It would be a less blasphemy

* Turretin. de Satisfac. p. 8.

against the excellency of God, to conceive him not knowing, than to imagine him not holy: and for the essentiality of his justice, Joshua joins both his holiness and his jealousy as going hand in hand, *he is a holy God, he is a jealous God, he will not forgive your sin, Josh.* 24. 19.

But consider only the purity of God, since it is contrary to sin, and consequently hating the sinner; the guilty person cannot be reduced to God, nor can the holiness of God have any complacency in an impure person, but as fire has in stubble, to consume it. How the holy God should be brought to delight in man, without a *salvo* for the rights of his holiness, is not to be conceived without an impeachment of the nature of God. The law could not be abolished; that would reflect indeed upon the righteousness of the Law-giver; to abolish it, because of sin, would imply a change of the rectitude of his nature: must he change his holiness for the sake of that which was against his holiness, in a compliance with a profane and unrighteous creature? This should engage him rather to maintain his law than to annul it. And to abrogate his law as soon as he had enacted it, since sin came into the world presently after it, would be no credit to his wisdom.

There must be a reparation made of the honour of God's holiness; by ourselves it could not be without condemnation; by another it could not be without a sufficiency in the person; no creature could do it. All the creatures being of a finite nature, could not make a compensation for the disparagements of infinite holiness. He must have despicable and vile thoughts of this excellent perfection, that imagines that a few tears, and deceitful fawnings at the death of a creature, can be sufficient to repair the wrongs, and restore the rights of this attribute. It must therefore be such a compensation as might be commensurate to the holiness of the divine nature and the divine law, which would not be wrought by any, but him that was possessed of a Godhead, to give efficacy and exact congruity to it. The person designed and appointed by God for so great an affair, was one *in the form of*

God, one *equal with God*, *Phil.* 2. 6, who could not be termed by such a title of dignity, if he had not been equal to God in the universal rectitude of the divine nature, and therefore in his holiness. The punishment due to sin is translated to that person for the righting divine holiness, and the righteousness of that person is communicated to the sinner for the pardon of the offending creature.

If the sinner had been eternally condemned, God's hatred of sin had been evidenced by the strokes of his justice; but his mercy to a sinner had lain in obscurity. If the sinner had been pardoned and saved without such a reparation, mercy had been evident; but his holiness had hid its head for ever in his own bosom. There was therefore a necessity of such a way to manifest his purity, and yet to bring forth his mercy: that mercy might not always sigh for the destruction of the creature, and that holiness might not mourn for the neglect of its honour.

(6.) Information. Hence it will follow, there is no justification of a sinner *by any thing in himself*. After sin had set foot in the world, man could present nothing to God acceptable to him, or bearing any proportion to the holiness of his law, till God set forth a Person, upon whose account the acceptation of our persons and services is founded, *Who hath made us accepted in the beloved*, *Ephes.* 1. 6. The infinite purity of God is so glorious, that it shames the holiness of angels, as the light of the sun dims the light of the fire; much more will the righteousness of fallen man, who is vile, and *drinks up iniquity like water*, vanish into nothing in his presence. With what self-abasement and abhorrence ought he to be possessed, that comes as short of the angels in purity, as a *dung-hill* doth of a star? The highest obedience that ever was performed by any mere man, since lapsed nature, cannot challenge any acceptance with God, or stand before so exact an inquisition. What person hath such a clear innocence, and unspotted obedience in such a perfection, as in any degree to suit the holiness of the divine nature? *Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified*, *Psal.* 143. 2. If God

should debate the case simply with man in his own person, without respecting the Mediator, he were not able to *answer one of a thousand.* Though we are his servants, as David was, and perform a sincere service, yet there are many little motes and dust of sin in the best works, that cannot lie undiscovered from the eye of his holiness; and if we come short in the least of what the law requires, we are *guilty of all, James* 2. 10. So that *in thy sight shall no man living be justified.* In the sight of thy infinite holiness, which hates the least spot; in the sight of thy infinite justice, which punishes the least transgression.

God would descend below his own nature, and vilify both his knowledge and purity, should he accept that for a righteousness and holiness which is not so in itself; and nothing is so, which hath the least stain upon it contrary to the nature of God. The most holy saints in scripture, upon a prospect of his purity, have cast away all confidence in themselves; every flash of the divine purity has struck them into a deep sense of their own impurity and shame for it, *Wherefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes, Job* 42. 6. What can the language of any man be that lies under a sense of infinite holiness, and his own defilement in the least, but that of the prophet, *Woe is me, I am undone? Isa.* 6. 5. And what is there in the world can administer any other thought than this, unless God be considered in Christ, *reconciling the world to himself?* As a holy God, so righted, as that he can dispense with the condemnation of a sinner, without dispensing with his hatred of sin: pardoning the sin in the criminal, because it hath been punished in the surety.

That righteousness which God hath set forth for justification, is not our own, but a *righteousness which is of God, Phil.* 3. 9, 10, of God's appointing, and of God's performing; appointed by the Father, who is God, and performed by the Son, who is one with the Father. A righteousness surmounting that of all the glorious angels, since it is an immutable one which can never fail, an *everlasting righteousness, Dan.* 9. 24. A righteousness wherein the holiness of God can acquiesce, as considered in itself, because it is a righteousness of one equal with God. As

we therefore dishonour the divine majesty, when we insist upon our own unholy righteousness for our justification, as if a *mortal man were as just as God*, and a *man as pure as his Maker*, so we highly honour the purity of his nature, when we charge ourselves with folly, acknowledge ourselves unclean, and accept of that righteousness which gives a full content to his infinite purity. There can be no justification of a sinner by any thing in himself.

(7.) Information. If holiness be a glorious perfection of the divine nature, then the *deity of Christ* might be argued from hence. He is indeed dignified with the title of the *Holy One, Acts* 3. 14, 16. a title often given to God in the Old Testament; and he is called, *The Holy of holies, Dan.* 9. 24; but because the angels seemed to be termed *Holy Ones, Dan.* 4. 13. 17, and the most sacred place in the temple was also called the *Holy of Holies*, I shall not insist upon that. But you find our Saviour particularly applauded by the angels, as holy; when this perfection of the divine nature, together with the incommunicable name of God, are linked together, and ascribed to him, *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, and the whole earth is full of his glory, Isa.* 6. 3. which the apostle interprets of Christ, *Isaiah said again, he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things, said Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and spake of him, John* 12. 39, 41. He that Isaiah saw surrounded with the Seraphims in a reverential posture before his face, and praised as most holy by them, was the true and eternal God; such acclamations belong to none, but the great Jehovah, God blessed for ever: but, saith John, it was the glory of Christ that Isaiah saw in this vision, Christ is therefore God blessed for ever, of whom it was said, *Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Hosts.**

The Evangelist had been speaking of Christ, the miracles which he wrought, the obstinacy of the Jews against believing on him; his glory is therefore is to be referred to the subject he had been speaking of. The evangelist

* Placeus de Deitat. Christi in locum.

was not speaking of the Father, but of the Son, and cites those words out of Isaiah; not to teach any thing of the Father, but to shew that the Jews could not believe in Christ. He speaks of him that had wrought so many miracles; but Christ wrought those miracles; he speaks of him on whom the Jews refused to believe, but Christ was the person on whom they would not believe, while they acknowledged God. It was the glory of this person Isaiah saw, and spake of, if the words of the evangelist be of any credit. The angels are too holy to give acclamations belonging to God, to any but Him that is God.

(8.) Information. That God is *fully adequate* to the government of the world. The righteousness of God's nature qualifies him to be judge of the world: if he were not perfectly righteous and holy, he were incapable to govern and judge the world; *If there be unrighteousness with God, how shall he judge the world? Rom.* 3. 5. *God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment, Job.* 34. 12. How despicable is a judge that wants innocence? As omniscience fits God to be a judge, so holiness fits him to be a righteous judge; *The Lord knows*, that is, loves *the way of the righteous:* but *the way of the ungodly shall perish, Psal.* 1. 6.

(9.) Information. If holiness be an eminent perfection of divine nature, the christian religion is of a *divine extraction.* It discovers the holiness of God, and forms the creature to a conformity to him. It gives us a prospect of his nature, represents him in the beauty of holiness, *Psal.* 110. 3, more than the whole glass of the creation. It is in this evangelical glass the glory of the Lord is beheld, and rendered amiable and imitable, 2 *Cor.* 3. 18. It is a doctrine *according to godliness*, 1 *Tim.* 6. 3, directing us to live the life of God; a life worthy of God, and worthy of our first creation by his hand. It takes us off from ourselves, fixes us upon a noble end, points our actions and the scope of our lives to God. It quells the monsters of sin, discountenanceth the motes of wickedness; and it is no mean argument for the divinity of it, that it sets us no lower a pattern for our imitation, than the holiness of the divine majesty. God is exalted

upon the throne of his holiness in it, and the creature advanced to an image and resemblance of it, *Be ye holy, for I am holy*, 1 *Pet.* 1. 16.

The *second* use is for *comfort*. This attribute frowns upon lapsed nature, but smiles in the restorations made by the gospel. God's holiness in conjunction with his justice, is terrible to a guilty sinner; but now, in conjunction with his mercy, by the satisfaction of Christ, it is sweet to a believing penitent. In the first covenant, the purity of his nature was joined with the rigours of his justice: In the second covenant, the purity of his nature is joined with the sweetness and tenderness of his mercy. In the one, justice flames against the sinner in the right of injured holiness; in the other, mercy yearns towards a believer, with the consent of the righted holiness. To rejoice in the holiness of God, is the true and genuine spirit of a renewed man: *My heart rejoiceth in the Lord*, and what follows? *There is none holy as the Lord*, 1 *Sam.* 2. 1, 2. Some perfections of the divine nature are astonishing, some terrifying, but this may fill us both with astonishment and joy.

1. By covenant we have an *interest in this attribute, as well as any other*. In that clause of God's being our God, entire God with all his glory, all his perfections are passed over as a portion, and a gracious soul is brought into union with God, as his God: not with a part of God, but with God in the simplicity, extent, integrity of his nature; and therefore in this attribute. And upon some account it may seem more in this attribute, than in any other; for if he be our God, he is our God in his life and glory, and therefore in his purity especially, without which he could not live, he could not be happy and blessed. Little comfort will it be to have a dead God, or a vile God made over to us: and as by this covenant he is our Father, so he gives us his nature, and communicates his holiness in all his dispensations; and in those that are severest, as well as those that are sweetest; *But he corrects us for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness*, *Heb.* 12. 10. Not simply partakers of holiness, but of *his* holiness; to have a portraiture of it in our

nature, a medal of it in our hearts, a spark of the same nature with that immense splendour and flame in himself. The holiness of a covenant soul, is a resemblance of the holiness of God, and formed by it: as the picture of the sun in a cloud is a fruit of his beams, and an image of its author. The fulness of the perfection of holiness remains in the nature of God as the fulness of the light does in the sun; yet there are transmissions of light from the sun to the moon, and it is a light of the same nature both in the one and in the other. The holiness of a creature, is nothing else but the reflection of the divine holiness upon it; and to make the creature capable of it, God takes various methods, according to his covenant grace.

2. This attribute renders God a fit object for *trust and dependence.* The notion of an unholy and unrighteous God, is an uncomfortable idea of him, and beats off our hands from laying hold of him. It is upon this attribute the reputation and honour of God in the world is built: What encouragement can we have to believe him, or what incentives could we have to serve him, without the lustre of this in his nature? The very thought of an unrighteous God, is enough to drive men at the greatest distance from him: as the honesty of a man gives a reputation to his word; so does the holiness of God give credit to his promise. It is by this he would have us stifle our fears, and fortify our trust; *Fear not thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; Isaiah* 41. 14. He will be in his actions, what he is in his nature. Nothing shall make him defile his own excellency: unrighteousness is the ground of mutability; but the promise of God never fails, because the rectitude of his nature never languishes. Were his attributes without the conduct of this, they would be altogether formidable. As this is the glory of all his other perfections; so this only renders him comfortable to a believing soul. Might we not fear his power to crush us, his mercy to overlook us, his wisdom to design against us, if this did not influence them? What an oppression is power without righteousness in the hand of a creature; It is de-

structive instead of protecting. The devil is a mighty spirit, but not fit to be trusted, because he is an impure spirit. When God would give us the highest security of the sincerity of his intentions, he *swears* by this attribute, *Psal.* 8. 35. His holiness, as well as his truth, is laid down as a pledge for the security of his promise. As we make God the judge between us and others, when we swear by him; so he makes his holiness the judge between himself and his people, when he swears by it.

This attribute renders him fit to be confided in for *the answer of our prayers.* This is the ground of his readiness to give. *If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts; how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? Mat.* 7. 11. Though the holiness of God be not mentioned, yet it is to be understood; the emphasis lies in these words, if you *being evil:* God is then considered in a disposition contrary to this, which can be nothing but his righteousness. "If you that are unholy, and have so much corruption in you, to render you cruel, can bestow upon your children the good things they want, how much more shall God, who is holy, and hath nothing in him to check his mercifulness to his creatures, grant the petitions of his suppliants?" It was this attribute edged the fiduciary importunity of the souls under the altar, for the revenging their blood unjustly shed upon the earth, *How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? Rev.* 6. 10. Let not thy holiness stand with folded arms, as careless of the eminent sufferings of those that fear thee, we implore thee by the holiness of thy nature, and the truth of thy word.

The holiness of God renders him fit to be confided in, for the comfort of our souls in *every afflicted condition.* The reviving the hearts of the spiritually afflicted, is a part of the holiness of his nature. *Thus saith the high and lofty one, that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, Isa.* 57. 15. He acknowledges himself the *lofty one,*

they might therefore fear he would not revive them; but he is also the *holy one*, and therefore he will refresh them; he is not more lofty than he is holy; besides the argument of the immutability of his promise, and the might of his power, here is the holiness of his nature moving him to pity his drooping creature. His promise is ushered in with the name of power, *high and lofty One*, to bar their distrust of his strength; and with a declaration of his *holiness*, to check any despair of his will. There is no ground to think I should be false to my word, or misemploy my power, since that cannot be, because of the holiness of my name and nature.

This attribute also renders him fit to be confided in for the *maintenance of grace*, and *protection of us against our spiritual enemies*. What our Saviour thought an argument in prayer, we may well take as a ground of confidence. In the strength of this he puts up his suit, when in his mediatory capacity he intercedes for the preservation of his people, *Holy Father, keep through thy own name those that thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are*, *John* 17. 11. *Holy Father*, not merciful Father, or powerful or wise Father, but *holy;* and *righteous Father*, ver. 25. Christ pleads that attribute for the performance of God's word, which was pledged when he passed his word. For it was by his *holiness* that he swore, that *his seed should endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before him*, *Psal.* 89. 36, which is meant of the perpetuity of the covenant which he had made with Christ, and is also meant of the preservation of the mystical seed of David, and the perpetuating his *loving kindness* to them, ver. 32, 33. Grace is an image of God's holiness, and therefore the holiness of God is most proper to be used as an argument to interest and engage him in the preservation of it. In the midst of church-provocations, he will not utterly extinguish her, because he is the holy one in the midst of her, *Hos.* 11. 9. Nor in the midst of judgments will he condemn his people to death, because he is their holy One; but their enemies shall be ordained for judgment, and established for correction, *Hab.* 1. 12. One prophet assures them

in the name of the Lord, upon the strength of this perfection; and the other upon the same ground is confident of the protection of the church, because of God's holiness engaged in an inviolable covenant.

3. Since holiness is a glorious perfection of the nature of God, he will certainly set a high *value upon every holy soul.* It is of a greater value with him than the souls of all men in the world that are destitute of it; wicked men are the worst of vilenesses, mere dross and dunghill, *Psal.* 12. 8.* Purity then, which is contrary to wickedness, must be the most precious thing in his esteem; he must needs love that quality which he is most pleased with in himself, as a father looks with most delight upon the child which is possessed with those dispositions he most values in his own nature. *His countenance doth behold the upright, Psal.* 11. 7. He looks upon them with a full and open face of favour, with a countenance clear, unmasked, and smiling, with a face full of delight. Heaven itself is not such a pleasing object to him, as the image of his own uncreated holiness in the created holiness of men and angels. As a man esteems that most which is most like him, of his own generation, more than a piece of art, which is merely the product of his wit or strength. And he must love holiness in the creature, he would not else love his own image, and consequently would undervalue himself. He despiseth the *image* the wicked bears, *Psal.* 73. 20. But he cannot disesteem his own stamp on his people; he cannot but delight in his own work, his choice work, the master-piece of all his works, the new creation of things; that which is next to himself, as being a *divine nature* like himself, 2 *Pet.* 1. 4.

When he overlooks strength, parts, knowledge, he cannot overlook this; he *sets apart him that is godly for himself, Psal.* 4. 3, as a peculiar object to take pleasure in; he reserves such for his own complacency, when he leaves the rest of the world to the devil's power; he is choice of them above all his other works, and will not let any have so great a propriety in them as himself. If it be so dear to him here in its imperfect and mixed condi-

* The vilest men, ולון

tion, that he appropriates it as a peculiar object for his own delight; how much more will the unspotted purity of glorified saints be infinitely pleasing to him? So that he will take less pleasure in the material heavens, than in such a soul. Sin only is detestable to God, and when this is done away, the soul becomes as lovely in his account, as before it was loathsome.

4. It is comfort, upon this account, that God will *perfect holiness* in every upright soul. We many times distrust God, and despond in ourselves, because of the infinite holiness of the divine nature, and the corruptions in our own; but the holiness of God engages him to the preservation of it, and consequently to the perfection of it; as appears by our Saviour's argument, *Holy Father, keep through thy own name, those whom thou hast given me, John* 17. 11, to what end? *that they may be one as we are;* one with us, in the resemblances of purity. And the holiness of the soul is used as an argument by the psalmist, *Preserve my soul, for I am holy, Psal.* 86. 2; that is, I have an ardent desire to holiness. Thou hast separated me from the mass of the corrupted world, preserve and perfect me with the assembly of the glorified. The more holy any are, the more communicative they are; God being most holy, is most communicative of that which he most esteems in himself, and delights to see in his creature. He is therefore more ready to impart his holiness to them that beg for it, than to communicate his knowledge or his power.

Though we were holy, yet he let Adam fall, who never petitioned his holiness to preserve him; he let him fall to declare the holiness of his own nature, which had wanted its due manifestation without it. But since that cannot be declared in a higher manner than it has been already in the death of the Surety that bore our guilt, there is no fear he should cast the work out of his hands, since the design of the permission of man's apostacy, in the discovery of the perfections of his nature, has been fully answered. The finishing *the good work he hath begun,* hath a relation to the glory of Christ; and his own glory in Christ to be manifested in the day of his appearing, wherein the

glory both of his own holiness, and the holiness of the Mediator, are to receive their full manifestation, *Phil.* 1. 6. As it is a part of the holiness of Christ to *sanctify his church*, till not a wrinkle or spot be left; so it is the part of God not to leave that work imperfect, which his holiness hath attempted a second time to beautify his creature with, *Eph.* 5. 26. He will not cease to exalt this attribute, which is the believer's by the new covenant, till he utters that applauding speech of his own work, *Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.*

PART V.

EXHORTATIONS.

Right apprehensions of the divine holiness—Importance of such apprehensions—Obligations to glorify the holiness of God—Conformity to this perfection—In what it consists—Enforced—Forms man for communion with God—Should labour for higher degrees of it—Spiritual frame of mind in approaching the throne of God.

THE THIRD use, is for exhortation.

Is holiness an eminent perfection of the divine nature? Then, *first*, let us get and preserve *right and strong apprehensions* of this divine perfection. Without a due sense of it, we can never exalt God in our hearts; and the more distinct conceptions we have of this, and the rest of his attributes, the more we glorify him. When

Moses considered God as *his strength and salvation*, he would exalt him, *Exod.* 15. 2, and he could never break out in so admirable a doxology as that in the text, without a deep sense of the glory of his purity, which he speaks of with so much admiration.

Such a sense of the holiness of God will be of use to us,

1. In promoting genuine *convictions*. A deep consideration of the holiness of God cannot but be followed with a deep consideration of our impure and miserable condition by reason of sin. We cannot glance upon it without reflections upon our own vileness. Adam no sooner heard the voice of a holy God in the garden, but he considered his own nakedness with shame and fear, *Gen.* 3. 10; much less can we fix our minds upon it, but we must be touched with a sense of our own uncleanness. The clear beams of the sun discover that defilement which was not visible in the darkness of the night. Impure metals are discerned by comparing them with that which is pure and perfect in its kind. The sense of guilt is the first natural result upon a sense of this excellent perfection; and the sense of the imperfection of our own righteousness is the next. Who can think of it, and reflect upon himself as an object fit for divine love? Who can have a due thought of it without regarding himself as stubble before a consuming fire? Who can, without a confusion of heart and face, glance upon that pure eye which beholds with detestation the foul motes as well as the more impure spots?

When Isaiah saw his glory, and heard how highly the angels exalted God for this perfection, he was ready to swoon, till a seraphim with a *coal from the altar*, both purified and revived him, *Isa.* 6. 5, 6, 7. They are sound and genuine convictions, which have the prospect of divine purity for their immediate spring, and not a foresight of our own misery; when it is not the punishment we have deserved, but the holiness we have offended, most grates our hearts. Such convictions are the first rude draughts of the divine image in our spirits; and grateful to God, because they are an acknowledgment of

the glory of this attribute, and the first mark of honour given to it by the creature: those that never had a sense of their own vileness, were always destitute of a sense of God's holiness. And by the way we may observe, that those who scoff at any for hanging down the head under the consideration and conviction of sin, as is too usual with the world, scoff at them for having deeper apprehensions of the purity of God than themselves, and consequently make a mock of the holiness of God, which is the ground of those convictions; a sense of this would prevent such wicked reproaching.

2. A sense of this will render us *humble in the possession of the greatest holiness* a creature were capable of. We are apt to be proud with the pharisee, when we look upon others wallowing in the mire of base and unnatural sins, but let any clap their wings, if they can, in a vain boasting and exaltation, when they view the holiness of God. What torch, if it had reason, would be proud of its own light, if it compared itself with the sun? *Who can stand before this holy Lord God,* 1 *Sam.* 6. 20, is the just reflection of the holiest person, as it was of those that had felt the marks of his jealousy after their looking into the ark, though likely out of affection to it, and triumphant joy at its return. When did the angels testify, by the covering of their faces, their weakness to bear the lustre of his majesty, but when they beheld his glory? When did they signify by their *covering their feet* the shame of their own vileness, but when their hearts were fullest of the applaudings of this perfection? *Isa.* 6. 2, 3. Though they found themselves without spot, yet not with such a holiness, that they could appear either with their faces or feet unveiled and unmasked in the presence of God. Doth the immense splendour of this attribute, engender shaming reflections in those pure spirits? What will it, what should it do in us, that dwell in houses of clay, and creep up and down with that clay upon our backs, and too much of it in our hearts? The stars themselves which appear beautiful in the night, are masked at the awakening of the sun: what a dim light is that of a glow-worm to that of the sun? The apprehen-

sions of this made the elders humble themselves in the midst of their glory, by *casting down their crowns before his throne*, *Rev.* 4. 8, 10, a metaphor taken from the triumphing generals among the Romans, who hung up their victorious laurels in the capital, dedicating them to their gods, acknowledging them their superiors in strength, and authors of their victory. This self-emptiness at the consideration of divine purity, is the note of the true church represented by the twenty-four *elders*, and a note of a true member of the church; whereas boasting of perfection and merit is the property of the anti-christian tribe, that have mean thoughts of this adorable perfection, and think themselves more righteous than the unspotted angels. What a self-annihilation is there in a good man when the sense of divine purity is most lively in him; yea, how detestable is he to himself? There is as little proportion between the holiness of the divine Majesty, and that of the most righteous creature, as there is between the nearness of a person that stands upon a mountain to the sun, and of him that beholds him in a vale, one is nearer than the other, but it is an advantage not to be boasted of, in regard of the vast distance that is between the sun and the elevated spectator.

3. This would make us full of an *affectionate reverence* in all our approaches to God. By this perfection God is rendered venerable, and fit to be reverenced by his creature; and magnificent thoughts of it in the creature would awaken him to an actual reverence of the divine Majesty. *Holy and reverend is his name*, *Psal.* 111. 9; a good opinion of this would engender in us a sincere respect towards him; we should then *serve the Lord with fear*, as the expression is, *Psal.* 2. 11, that is, be afraid to cast any thing before him that may offend the eyes of his purity. Who would venture rashly and garishly into the presence of an eminent moralist, or of a righteous king upon his throne? The fixedness of the angels arose from the continual prospect of this. What if we had been with Isaiah when he saw the vision, and beheld him in the same glory, and the heavenly choir in their reverential posture in the service of God; would it not have

barred our wanderings, and staked us down to our duty? Would not the fortifying an idea of it in our minds produce the same effect? It is for want of this we carry ourselves so loosely and unbecomingly in the divine presence, with the same, or meaner affections than those wherewith we stand before some vile creature, that is our superior in the world.

How does the psalmist double his exhortation to sing praise to God; *Sing praise to God, sing praises; sing praise to our King, sing praise, Psal* 47. 6, because of his majesty, and the purity of his dominion: and ver. 8, God *reigns over the heathen, God sits upon the throne of his holiness.* How would this elevate us in praise, and prostrate us in prayer, when we praise and pray with an understanding and insight of that nature we bless or implore; as he speaks ver. 7, *Sing ye praise with understanding.* The holiness of God in his government and dominion, the holiness of his nature, and the holiness of his precepts, should beget in us an humble respect in our approaches to him. The more we grow in a sense of this, the more shall we advance in the true performance of all our duties. * Those nations which adored the sun, had they at first seen his brightness wrapped and masked in a cloud, and paid a veneration to it, how would their adorations have mounted to a greater point, after they had seen it in its full brightness, shaking off those veils, and chasing away the mists before it: what a profound reverence would they have paid it, when they beheld it in its glory and meridian brightness? Our reverence to God in all our addresses to him will arrive to greater degrees, if every act of duty be ushered in, and seasoned with the thoughts of God as sitting upon a throne of holiness; we shall have a more becoming sense of our own vileness, a greater ardour to his service, a deeper respect in his presence, if our understanding be more cleared, and possessed with notions of this perfection. Thus take a view of God in this part of his glory, before you fall down before his throne, and assure yourselves you will

* Amyrald Moral. tom. 5. p. 462.

find your hearts and services quickened with a new and lively spirit.

4. A due sense of this perfection in God would produce in us a *fear of God, and arm us against temptations and sin.* What made the heathens so wanton and loose, but the representations of their gods as vicious? Who would stand upon the commission of any sin, that can take a pattern for them from the person he adores for a Deity? Upon which account Plato would have poets banished from his commonwealth, because by dressing up their gods in wanton garbs in their poems, they encouraged wickedness in the people. But if the thoughts of God's holiness were impressed upon us, we should regard sin with the same eye, mark it with the same detestation in our measure, as God himself doth. So far as we are sensible of the divine purity, we should account sin vile as it deserves; we should hate it entirely, without a grain of love to it, and hate it perpetually. *Through thy precepts I get understanding, therefore I hate every false way, Psal.* 119. 104. He looks into God's statute-book, and thereby arrives to an understanding of the purity of his nature, whence his hatred of iniquity commenced. This would govern our motions and check our vices; it would make us tremble at the hissing of a temptation: when a corruption did but move, and put forth its head, a look to the divine purity would be attended with fresh strength to resist it. There is no such fortification, as to be wrapped up in the sense of this: this would fill us with an awe of God; we should be ashamed to admit any thing, which we know is detestable to his pure eye. As the approach of a grave and serious man makes children hasten their trifles out of the way; so would the consideration of this attribute make us cast away our idols, and all our ridiculous thoughts and designs.

5. A due sense of this perfection, would inflame us with a vehement *desire to be conformed to him.* All our desires would be ardent to regulate ourselves according to this pattern of holiness and goodness, which is not to be equalled; the contemplating it as it shines forth in the face of God, will *transform us into the same image,*

2 *Cor.* 3. 19. Since our lapsed state, we cannot behold the holiness of God in itself without affrightment; nor is it an object of imitation, but as tempered in Christ to our view. When we cannot without blinding ourselves, look upon the sun in its brightness, we may behold it through a coloured glass, whereby the lustre of it is moderated, without dazzling our eyes. The sense of it will furnish us with such greatness of mind, that little things will be contemned by us; motives of a greater alloy would have little influence upon us; we should have the highest motives to every duty, and motives of the same strain which influence the angels above. It would change us, not only into an angelical nature, but a divine nature; we should act like men of another sphere; as if we had received our original in another world, and had seen with angels the ravishing beauties of heaven. How little would the mean employments of the world sink us into dirt and mud?

How often hath the meditation of the courage of a valiant man, or acuteness and industry of a learned person, spurred on some men to an imitation of them, and transformed them into the same nature? As the looking upon the sun imprints an image of the sun upon our eye, that we seem to behold nothing but the sun a while after. The view of the divine purity would fill us with a holy generosity to imitate him, more than the examples of the best men upon earth. It was a saying of a Heathen, that, "if virtue were visible, it would kindle a noble flame of love to it in the heart, by its ravishing beauty." Shall the infinite purity of the author of all virtue come short of the strength of a creature? Can we not render that visible to us by frequent meditation, which though it be invisible in his nature, is made visible in his law, in his ways, in his Son? It would make us ready to obey him, since we know he cannot command any thing that is sinful, but what is holy, just, and good: it would put all our affections in their due place, elevate them above the creature, and subject them to the Creator.

6. It would make us *patient* and *contented* under all

God's dispensations. All penal evils are the fruits of his holiness, as he is judge and governor of the world; he is not an arbitrary judge, nor does any sentence pronounced, nor warrant for execution, issue from him, but what bears upon it a stamp of the righteousness of his nature; he does nothing by passion or unrighteousness, but according to the eternal law of his own unstained nature, which is a rule to him in his works, the basis and foundation of his throne and sovereign dominion. *Justice*, or righteousness, and *judgment are the habitation of thy throne*, *Psal.* 89. 14; upon these his sovereign power is established; so that there can be no just complaint or indictment brought against any of his proceedings with men. How doth our Saviour, who had the highest apprehensions of God's holiness, justify God in his deepest distresses, when he cried and was not answered in the particular he desired, in that prophetic psalm of him; "*I cry day and night, but thou hearest not*, *Psal.* 22. 2, 3. Thou seemest to be deaf to all my petitions, afar off *from the words of my roaring, but thou art holy.* I cast no blame upon thee; all thy dealings are ordered by thy holiness, this is the only law to thee; in this I acquiesce. It is part of thy holiness to hide thy face from me, to shew thereby thy detestation of sin." Our Saviour adores the divine purity in his sharpest agony, and a like sense of it would guide us in the same steps to acknowledge and glorify it, in our greatest desertions and afflictions; especially since as they are the fruit of the holiness of his nature, so they are the means to impart to us clearer stamps of holinnss, according to that in himself, which is the original copy, *Heb.* 12. 10. He melts us down as gold, to fit us for the receiving a new impression, to mortify the affections of the flesh, and clothe us with the graces of his Spirit. The due sense of this would make us submit to his stroke, and wait upon him for a good issue of his dealings.

Second exhortation. Is holiness a perfection of the divine nature? Is it the glory of the Deity? Then let us *glorify* this holiness of God. Moses glorifies it in the text, and glorifies it in a song, which was a copy for

all ages. The whole corporation of seraphims have their mouths filled with the praises of it. The saints, whether militant on earth, or triumphant in heaven, are to continue the same acclamation, *Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Hosts, Rev.* 4. 8. Neither angels nor glorified spirits exalt at the same rate, the power which formed them creatures, nor goodness which preserves them in a blessed immortality, as they do holiness, which they bear some beams of in their own nature, and whereby they are capacitated to stand before his throne. Upon the account of this, a debt of praise is demanded of all rational creatures by the psalmist, *Let them praise thy great and terrible name, for it is holy, Psal.* 99. 3. Not so much for the greatness of his majesty, or the treasures of his justice; but as they are considered in conjunction with his holiness, which renders them beautiful; *for it is holy.* Grandeur and majesty simply in themselves, are not objects of praise, nor do they merit the acclamations of men, when destitute of righteousness; this only renders every thing else adorable; and this adorns the divine greatness with an amiableness; *Isa.* 12. 6. Great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee; and makes his might worthy of praise, *Luke* 1. 49.

In honouring this which is the soul and spirit of all the rest, we give glory to all the perfections which constitute and beautify his nature: and without the glorifying this, we glorify nothing of them, though we should extol every other single attribute a thousand times. He values no other adoration of his creatures, unless this be interested, nor accepts any thing as a glory from them; *I will be sanctified in them that come near me, and I will be glorified, Lev.* 10. 3. As if he had said, in manifesting my name to be holy, you truly, you only honour me. And as the scripture seldom speaks of this perfection without a particular emphasis, it teaches us not to think of it without a special elevation of heart; by this act only, while we are on earth, can we join consort with the angels in heaven; he that does not honour it, delight in it and in the meditation of it, has no resemblance of it; he has

none of the image, who delights not in the original. Every thing of God is glorious, but this most of all. If he built the world principally for any thing, it was for the communication of his goodness, and display of his holiness. He formed the rational creature to manifest his holiness in that law whereby he was to be governed; then deprive not God of the design of his own glory.

We honour this attribute, 1. When we make it *the ground of our love* to God. Not because he is gracious to us, but holy in himself. As God honours it, in loving himself for it, we should honour it, by fixing our affections upon him chiefly for it. What renders God amiable to himself, should render him lovely to all his creatures. *The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake, Isa.* 42. 21. If the hatred of evil be the immediate result of love to God, then the peculiar object or term of our love to God, must be that perfection which stands in direct opposition to the hatred of evil. *Ye that love the Lord, hate evil, Psal.* 90. 10. When we honour his holiness in every stamp and impression of it; his law, not principally because of its usefulness to us, its accommodateness to the order of the world, but for its innate purity, and his people not for our interest in them, so much as for bearing upon them this glittering mark of the Deity, we honour then the purity of the law-giver, and the excellency of the sanctifier.

2. We honour it, when we *regard chiefly* the illustrious appearance of this in his judgments in the world. In a case of temporal judgment, Moses celebrates it in the text. In a case of spiritual judgments, the angels applaud it in Isaiah. All his severe proceedings are nothing but the strong breathings of this attribute. Purity is the flash of his revenging sword. If he did not hate evil, his vengeance would not reach the committers of it; he is a refiner's fire in the day of his anger, *Mal.* 3. 2. By his separating judgments, he *takes away the wicked of the earth like dross, Psal.* 119. 119. How is his holiness honoured, when we take notice of his sweeping out the rubbish of the world; how he suits punishment to sin, and

discovers his hatred of the matter and circumstances of the evil, in the matter and circumstances of the judgment. This perfection is legible in every stroke of his sword; we honour it when we read the syllables of it, and not by standing amazed only at the greatness and severity of the blow, when we read how holy he is in his most terrible dispensations; for as in them God magnifies the greatness of his power, so he sanctifies himself; that is, declares the purity of his nature as a revenger of all impiety. *And I will plead against him with pestilence, and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the people that are with him, an overflowing rain and great hail-stones, fire and brimstone. Thus will I magnify my self, and sanctify myself*, *Ezek.* 38. 22, 23.

3. We honour this attribute, when we take *notice* of it in every *accomplishment of his promise*, and every *grant of mercy*. His truth is but a branch of his righteousness, a slip from this root. He is glorious in holiness in the account of Moses, because he *led forth his people whom he had redeemed*, *Exod.* 15, 13. His people by a covenant with their fathers, being the God of Moses, the God of Israel, and the God of their fathers, ver. 2, *my God, and my father's God, I will exalt thee.* For what? for his faithfulness to his promise. The holiness of God, which Mary, *Luke* 1. 49, magnifies, is summed up in this, the help he afforded his servant Israel in the *remembrance of his mercy, as he spake to our fathers*, to Abraham, *and his seed for ever*, ver. 54, 55. The certainty of his covenant mercy depends upon an unchangeableness of his holiness. What are called *sure mercies*, in *Isa.* 55, 3, are *holy* mercies in the Septuagint; and in *Acts* 13. 34, which makes that translation canonical.

His nearness to answer him when we call upon him for such mercies, is a fruit of the holiness of his name and nature; *The Lord is holy in all his works; the Lord is nigh to all them that call upon him. Psal.* 145. 17. Hannah, after a return of prayer, sets a particular mark upon this in her song, *There is none holy as the Lord*, 1 *Sam.* 2, 2, separated from all dross, firm to his covenant, and righ-

teous in it to his suppliants that confide in him, and plead his word. When we observe the workings of this in every return of prayer, we honour it; it is a sign the mercy is really a return of prayer, and not a mercy of course, bearing upon it only the characters of a common providence. This was the perfection David would bless for the catalogue of mercies in *Psal.* 103. 1, &c. *Bless his holy name.* Certainly one reason why sincere prayer is so delightful to him, is because it puts him upon the exercise of this his beloved perfection, which he so much delights to honour. Since God acts in all these as the governor of the world, we honour him not, unless we take notice of that righteousness which fits him for a governor, and is the inward spring of all his motion. *Shall not the judge of all the earth do right? Gen.* 18. 25. It was his design in his pity to Israel, as well as the calamities he intended against the heathens, to be *sanctified in them;* that is, declared holy in his merciful, as well as his judicial procedure, *Ezek.* 36. 21, 23. Hereby God credits the righteousness, which seemed to be forgotten by the one, and contemned by the other,* he removes by this all suspicion of any unfaithfulness in him.

4. We honour this attribute, when we *trust his covenant and promise against outward appearances.* Thus our Saviour in the prophecy of him, *Psal.* 22. 2, 3, 4, when God seemed to bar up the gates of his palace against the entry of any more petitions. This attribute proves the support of the Redeemer's soul; *but thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel;* as it refers to what goes before, it has been twice explained; as it refers to what follows, it is a ground of trust, *thou inhabitest the praises of Israel*; thou hast had the praises of Israel for many ages for thy holiness. How? *Our fathers trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them;* they honoured thy holiness by their trust, and thou didst honour their faith by a deliverance; thou always hadst a purity that would not shame nor confound them. I will trust in thee as thou art

* Sanct. in loc.

holy, and expect the breaking out of this attribute for my good as well as my predecessors'; *Our fathers trusted in thee*, &c.

5. We honour this attribute, when we shew a *greater affection to the marks of his holiness in times of the greatest contempt* of it. As the Psalmist, *They have made void thy law, therefore I love thy commandments above gold*, *Psal.* 119. 126, 127. While they spurn at the purity of thy law, I will value it above the gold they possess; I will esteem it as gold, because others count it as dross; by their scorn of it, my love to it shall be the warmer, and my hatred of iniquity shall be the sharper; the disdain of others should inflame us with a zeal and fortitude to appear in the behalf of his despised honour. We honour this holiness many other ways; by preparation for our addresses to him out of a sense of his purity; when we imitate it; as he honours us by teaching us his statutes, so we honour him by learning and observing them, *Psal.* 119. 135. When we beg of him to shew himself a refiner of us, to make us more conformable to him in holiness, and bless him for any communication of it to us, it renders us beautiful and lovely in his sight.

To conclude; to honour it is the way to engage it for us; to give it the glory of what it hath done by the arm of power for our rescue from sin, and beating down our corruptions at his feet, is the way to see more of its marvellous works, and behold a clearer brightness. As unthankfulness makes him withdraw his grace, so glorifying him causes him to impart it. God honours men in the same way they honour him: when we honour him by acknowledging his purity, he will honour us by communicating of it to us. This is the way to derive a greater excellency to our souls.

Third Exhortation. Since holiness is an eminent perfection of the divine nature, let us *labour after a conformity to God* in this perfection. The nature of God is presented to us in the scripture, both as a pattern to imitate, and a motive to persuade the creature to holiness. 1 *John* 3. 3. *Matt.* 5. 41. *Levit.* 11. 44. 1 *Pet.* 1. 15, 16. Since it is therefore the nature of God, the

more our natures are beautified with it, the more like we are to the divine nature. It is not the pattern of angels, nor archangels, that our Saviour or his apostle proposeth for our imitation, but the original of all purity, God himself. The same that created us, to be imitated by us. Nor is an equal degree of purity enjoined us; though we are to be pure, and perfect, and merciful as God is, yet not essentially so; for that would be to command us an impossibility in itself; as much as to order us to cease to be creatures, and commence Gods. No creature can be essentially holy but by participation from the chief fountain of holiness; but we must have the same kind of holiness, the same truth of holiness. As a short line may be as straight as another, though it parallel it not in the immense length of it: a copy may have the likeness of the original, though not the same perfection. We cannot be good, without eyeing some exemplar of goodness as the pattern. No pattern is so suitable as that which is the highest goodness and purity. That limner that would draw the most excellent piece, fixes his eyes upon the most perfect pattern. He that would be a good orator, or poet, or artificer, considers some person most excellent in each kind, as the object of his imitation. Who so fit as God to be viewed as the pattern of holiness, in our intendment of, and endeavour after holiness? The stoics, one of the best sects of philosophers, advised their disciples to pitch upon some eminent example of virtue, according to which to form their lives; as Socrates, &c. But true holiness does not only endeavour to live the life of a good man, but chuses to live a divine life: as before the man was *alienated from the life of God*, so upon his return he aspires after the life of God. To endeavour to be like a good man, is to make one image like another; to set our clocks by other clocks, without regarding the sun: but true holiness consists in a likeness to the most exact sampler. God being the first purity, is the rule as well as the spring of all purity in the creature, the chief and first object of imitation. We disown ourselves to be his creatures, if we breathe not after a resemblance to him in what he is imi-

table. There was in man, as created according to God's image, a natural appetite to resemble God: it was at first planted in him by the author of his nature. The devil's temptation of him by that motive to transgress the law, had been as an arrow shot against a brazen wall, had there not been a desire of some likeness to his Creator engraven upon him. *Gen.* 3. 5. It would have had no more influence upon him, than it could have had upon a mere animal. But man mistook the term; he would have been like God in knowledge, whereas he should have affected a greater resemblance of him in purity. O that we could exemplify God in our nature! Precepts may instruct us more, but examples affect us more; one directs us, the other attracts us. What can be more attractive of our imitation, than that which is the original of all purity both in men and angels?

This conformity to him consists in imitation of him, in his *law*. The purity of his nature was first visible in this glass; hence it is called a holy law, *Rom.* 7. 12: a *pure* law, *Psa.* 19. 8. Holy and pure, as it is a ray of the pure nature of the Law-giver. When our lives are a comment upon his law, they are expressive of his holiness: we conform to his holiness, when we regulate ourselves by his law, as it is a transcript of his holiness: we do not imitate it, when we do a thing in the matter of it agreeable to that holy rule, but when we do it with respect to the purity of the Law-giver beaming in it. If it be agreeable to God's will, and convenient for some design of our own, and we do any thing only with a respect to that design, we make not God's holiness discovered in the law our rule, but our own conveniency: it is not a conformity to God, but a conformity of our actions to self. As in abstinence from intemperate courses, not because the holiness of God in his law hath prescribed it, but because the health of our bodies, or some noble contentments of life require it; then it is not God's holiness that is our rule, but our own security, conveniency, or some thing else which we make a God to ourselves.

It must be a real conformity to the law: our holiness should shine as really in the practice, as God's

purity does in the precept. God hath not a mere pretence of purity in his nature, but a reality: it is not only a sudden boiling up of an admiration of him, or a starting wish to be like him, from some sudden impression upon the fancy, (which is a mere temporary blaze) but a settled temper of soul, loving every thing that is like him, doing things out of a firm desire to resemble his purity in the copy he hath set; not a resting in negatives, but aspiring to positives; holy and harmless are distinct things: they were distinct qualifications in our high priest in his obedience to the law, *Heb.* 7. 26; so they must be in us.

This conformity consists further, in imitation of him, in his *Christ.* As the law is the transcript, so Christ is the image, of his holiness: the glory of God is too dazzling to be beheld by us: the acute eye of an angel is too weak to look upon that bright sun without covering his face. We are much too weak to take our measures from that Purity which is infinite in his nature. But he hath made his Son like us, that by the imitation of him in that temper, and shadow of human flesh, we may arrive to a resemblance of him, 2 *Cor.* 3. 18. Then there is a conformity to him, when that which Christ did is drawn in lively colours in the soul of a christian; when as he died upon the cross we die to our sins; as he rose from the grave we rise from our lusts; as he ascended on high, we mount our souls thither: when we express in our lives what shined in his, and exemplify in our hearts what he acted in the world, and become with him, as he was, separate from sinners. The holiness of God in Christ is our ultimate pattern: as we are not only to believe in Christ, but by Christ in God, *Job* 14. 1, so we are not only to imitate Christ, but the holiness of God as discovered in Christ.

And to enforce this upon us, let us consider,

1. It is *this only* wherein *he commands* our imitation of him. We are not commanded to be mighty and wise, as God is mighty and wise; but *be holy as I am holy.* The declarations of his power are to enforce our subjection; those of his wisdom to encourage our direction by him; but this only to attract our imitation. When he saith,

I am holy, the immediate inference he makes, is *be ye so too*, which is not the proper instruction from any other perfection.* Man was created by divine power, and harmonized by divine wisdom, but not after them, or according to them, as the true image; this was the prerogative of divine holiness, to be the pattern of his rational creature, *Eph.* 4. 24. *Col.* 3. 10. Wisdom and power were subservient to this, the one as the pencil, the other as the hand that moved it. The condition of a creature is too mean to have the communications of the divine essence, the true impressions of his righteousness and goodness we are only capable of. It is only in those moral perfections we are said to resemble God. The devils, those impure and ruined spirits, are nearer to him in strength and knowledge than we are; yet in regard of that natural and intellectual perfection, never counted like him, but at the greatest distance from him, because at the greatest distance from his purity. God values not a natural might, nor an accute understanding, nor vouchsafes such perfections the glorious title of that of his image. † Plutarch says God is angry with those that imitate his thunder or lightning, his works of majesty; but delighted with those that imitate his virtue. In this only we can never incur any reproof from him, but for falling short of him and his glory. Had Adam endeavoured after an imitation ofthis, instead of that of divine knowledge, he had escaped his fall, and preserved his standing; and had Lucifer wished himself like God in this, as well as his dominion, he had still been a glorious angel. To reach after union with the Supreme Being in regard of holiness, is the only generous and commendable ambition.

2. This is *the prime way of honouring God.* We do not so glorify God by elevated admirations, or eloquent expressions, or pompous services of him, as when we aspire to converse with him with unstained spirits, and live to him in living like him. The angels are not called holy for applauding his purity, but conforming to it. The

* In this saith Plato, God is εν μέσω παράδειγμα.

† Eugub. inde perenni philoso. Lib. 6. cap. 6.

more perfect any creature is in the rank of beings, the more is the Creator honoured; as it is more for the honour of God to create an angel or man, than a mere animal; because there are in such, clearer characters of divine power and goodness, than in those that are inferior. The more perfect any creature is morally, the more is God glorified by that creature; it is a real declaration that God is the best and most amiable being; that nothing besides him is valuable, and worthy to be the object of our imitation. It is a greater honouring of him, than the highest acts of devotion, and the most religious bodily exercise, or the singing this song of Moses in the text, with a triumphant spirit. As it is more the honour of a father to be imitated in his virtues by his son, than to have all the highest commendations of the tongue or pen of a vicious and debauched child. By this we honour him in that perfection which is dearest to him, and counted by him as the chiefest glory of his nature.

God seems to accept the glorifying of this attribute, as if it were a real addition to that holiness which is infinite in his nature, and because infinite, cannot admit of any increase: and therefore the word *sanctified* is used instead of glorified, *Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread, Isa.* 8. 13. And *they shall sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and fear the God of Israel, Isa.* 29. 23. This sanctification of God is by the fear of him, which signifies in the language of the Old Testament, a reverence of him, and a righteousness before him. He does not say, when he would have his power or wisdom glorified, *empower me* or *make me wise;* but when he would have holiness glorified by the creature, he says *sanctify me;* that is, manifest the purity of my nature by the holiness of your lives: but he expresses it in such a term, as if it were an addition to this infinite perfection, so acceptable it is to him; as if it were a contribution from his creature for the enlarging an attribute so pleasing to him, and so glorious in his eye. It is as much as in the creature lies, a preserving the life of God, since this perfection is his life; and that he would as soon part with his life as part

with his purity. It keeps up the reputation of God in the world, and attracts others to a love of him; whereas unworthy carriages defame God in the eyes of men, and bring up an ill report of him, as if he were such a one as those that profess him, and walk unsuitably to their profession, appear to be.

3. This is *the excellency and beauty of a creature.* The title of beauty is given to it in *Psal.* 110. 3. Beauties in the plural number, as comprehending in it all other beauties whatsoever. What is a divine excellency can not be a creature's deformity: the natural beauty of it is a representation of the divinity; and a holy man ought to esteem himself excellent, it being such in his measure as his God is, and puts his principal felicity in the possession of the same purity in truth. This is the refined complexion of the angels that stand before his throne. The devils lost their comeliness when they fell from it. It was the honour of the human nature of our Saviour, not only to be united to the Deity, but to be sanctified by it. He was *fairer than all the children of men,* because he had a holiness above the children of men: *grace was poured into his lips, Psal.* 45. 2. It was the jewel of the reasonable nature in paradise: conformity to God was man's original happiness in his created state, and what was naturally so, cannot but be immutably so in its own nature. The beauty of every thing copied consists in its likeness to the original: every thing hath more of loveliness, as it hath greater impressions of its first pattern: in this respect holiness has more of beauty on it, than the whole creation, because it partakes of a greater excellency of God than the sun, moon, and stars.

No greater glory can be, than to be a conspicuous and visible image of the invisible, and holy, and blessed God. As this is the splendour of all the divine attributes, so it is the flower of all a christian's graces, the crown of all religion: It is the glory of the Spirit. In this the *king's daughter* is said to be *all glorious within, Psal.* 45. 13. It is more excellent than the soul itself, since the greatest soul is but a deformed piece without it; "a diamond with-

out lustre."* What are the noble faculties of the soul without it, but as a curious rusty watch, a delicate heap of disorder and confusion? It is impossible there can be beauty, where there are a multitude of spots and wrinkles that blemish a countenance, *Eph.* 5. 27. It can never be in its true brightness, but when it is perfect in purity, when it regains what it was possessed of by creation, and dispossessed of by the fall, and recovers its primitive temper. We are not so beantiful by being the work of God, as by having a stamp of God upon us. Worldly greatness may make men honourable in the sight of creeping worms. Soft lives, ambitious reaches, luxurious pleasures, and a pompous religion render no man excellent and noble in the sight of God: this is not the excellency and nobility of the deity which we are bound to resemble; other lines of a divine image must be drawn in us to render us truly excellent.

4. It is *our life.* What is the life of God, is truly the life of a rational creature.† The life of the body consists not in the perfection of its members, and the integrity of its organs, these remain when the body becomes a dead carcase; but in the presence of the soul, and its vigorous animation of every part, to perform the distinct offices belonging to each of them. The life of the soul consists not in its being, or spiritual substance, or the excellency of its faculties of understanding and will, but in the moral and becoming operations of them. The spirit is only *life because of righteousness, Rom.* 8. 10. The faculties are turned by it, to acquit themselves in their functions, according to the will of God; the absence of this doth not only deform the soul, but in a sort annihilate it, in regard of its true essence and end. Grace gives a christian being, and a want of it is the want of a true being, 1 *Cor.* 15. 10. When Adam divested himself of his original righteousness, he came under the force of the threatening, in regard of a spiritual death; every person is morally *dead*

* Vaughan, p. 4. 5. † Amirald, in Heb. p. 101, 102.

while he lives an unholy life, 1 *Tim.* 5. 6. What life is to the body, that is righteousness to the Spirit; and the greater measure of holiness it hath, the more of life it hath, because it is in a greater nearness, and partakes more fully of the fountain of life. Is not that the most worthy life, which God makes most account of, without which his life could not be a pleasant and blessed life, but a life worse than death? What a miserable life is that of the men of the world, that are carried with greedy inclinations to all manner of unrighteousness, whither their interests or their lusts invite them? The most beautiful body is a vile carcase, and the most honourable person hath but a brutish life, *Psal.* 49. 20; miserable creatures when their life shall be extinct without a divine rectitude, when all other things will vanish as the shadows of the night at the appearance of the sun. Holiness is our life.

5. It is this only fits us for *communion with God.* Since it is our beauty and our life; without it, what communion can an excellent God have with deformed creatures, a living God with dead creatures? *Without holiness none shall see God, Heb.* 12. 14. The creature must be stripped of his unrighteousness, or God of his purity, before they can come together. Likeness is the ground of communion and of delight in it; the opposition between God and unholy souls, is as great as that between *light and darkness,* divine fruition is not so much by a union of presence, as a union of nature. Heaven is not so much an outward, as an inward life; the foundation of glory is laid in grace; a resemblance to God is our vital happiness, without which the vision of God would not be so much as a cloudy and shadowy happiness, but rather a torment than a felicity; unless we be of a like nature to God, we cannot have a pleasing fruition of him.

Some philosophers think, that if our bodies were of the same nature with the heavens, of an ethereal substance, the nearness to the sun would cherish, not scorch us. Were we partakers of a divine nature, we might enjoy God with delight; whereas remaining in our un-

likeness to him, we cannot think of him, and approach to him without terror. As soon as sin had stripped man of the image of God, he was an exile from the comfortable presence of God, unworthy for God to hold any correspondence with; he can no more delight in a defiled person, than a man can take a toad into intimate converse with him; he would hereby discredit his own nature, and justify our impurity. The holiness of a creature only prepares him for an eternal conjunction with God in glory. Enoch's walking with God, was the cause of his being so soon wafted to the full fruition of him; he hath as much delight in such, as in heaven itself; one is his habitation as well as the other; the one is his habitation of glory, and the other is the house of his pleasure. If he dwell in Zion, it must be a *holy mountain*, *Joel* 3. 17, and the members of Zion must be upheld in their rectitude and integrity, before they be set before *the face of God for ever*, *Psal.* 41. 12.

Such are styled his jewels, his portion, as if he lived upon them, as a man upon his inheritance. As God cannot delight in us, so neither can we delight in God without it. We must purify ourselves *as he is pure*, if we expect to *see him as he is* in the comfortable glory and beauty of his nature; else the sight of God would be terrible and troublesome; we cannot be satisfied with the likeness of God at the resurrection, unless we have a *righteousness* wherewith to *behold his face*, *Psal.* 17. 15. It is a vain imagination in any to think that heaven can be a place of happiness to him, in whose eye the beauty of holiness, which fills and adorns it, is an unlovely thing; or that any can have satisfaction in that divine purity which is loathsome to him in the imitations of it. We cannot enjoy him, unless we resemble him; nor take any pleasure in him if we were with him, without something of likeness to him. Holiness fits us for communion with God.

6. We can *have no evidence* of our election and adoption without it. Conformity to God in purity, is the fruit of electing love, *He hath chosen us that we should be holy*, *Eph.* 1. 4. The goodness of the fruit evidences

the nature of the root; this is the seal that assures us the patent is the authentic grant of the prince. Whatsoever is holy, speaks itself to be from God; and whosoever is holy, speaks himself to belong to God. This is the only evidence that *we are born of God, John 2. 29.* The subduing our souls to him, the forming us into a resemblance to himself, is a more certain sign we belong to him, than if we had with Isaiah seen his glory in the vision with all his train of angels about him. This justifies us to be the seed of God, when he hath as it were taken a portion from his own purity, and engrafted it in our spirits. He can never own us for his children without his mark, the stamp of holiness. Satan's stamp is none of God's badge. Our spiritual extraction from him is but pretended, unless we do things worthy of so illustrious a birth, and becoming the honour of so great a father. What evidence can we else have of any child-like love to God, since the proper act of love is to imitate the object of our affections?

And that we may be in some measure like to God in this excellent perfection;

1. Let us be *often viewing and ruminating* on the holiness of God, especially as discovered in Christ. It is by believing meditation on him, that we are *changed into the same image, Cor. 3. 18.* We can think often of nothing that is excellent in the world, but it draws our faculties to some kind of suitable operation; and why should not such an excellent idea of the holiness of God in Christ perfect our understandings, and awaken all the powers of our souls to be formed to actions worthy of him? A painter employed in drawing some excellent piece, has not only his pattern before his eyes, but his eye frequently upon the pattern, to possess his fancy to draw forth an exact resemblance. He that would express the image of God, must imprint upon his mind the purity of his nature; cherish it in his thoughts, that the excellent beauty of it may pass from his understanding to his affections, and from his affections to his practice. How can we arise to conformity to God in Christ, whose most holy nature we seldom glance upon, and

more rarely sink our souls into the depths of it by meditation? Be frequent in the meditation of the holiness of God.

2. Let us often exercise ourselves *in acts of love* to God, because of this perfection. The more adoring thoughts we have of God, the more delightfully we shall aspire to, and more ravishingly catch after, any thing that may promote the more full draught of his divine image in our hearts. What we intensely affect, we desire to be as near to as we can, and to be that very thing rather than ourselves. All imitations of others, arise from an intense love to their persons or excellency. When the soul is delighted with this perfection of God, it will desire to be united with it; to have it drawn in it, more than to have its own being continued to it. It will desire and delight in its own being, in order to this heavenly and spiritual work. The impressions of the nature of God upon it, and the imitations of the nature of God by it, will be more desirable than any natural perfection whatsoever, The will in loving is rendered like the object beloved; is turned into its nature,* and imbibes its qualities. The soul by loving God, will find itself more and more transformed into the divine image, whereas slighted ensamples are never thought worthy of imitation.

3. Let us make *God our end.* Every man's mind forms itself to a likeness to that which it makes its chief end. An earthly soul is as drossy as the earth he desires. An ambitious soul is as elevated as the honour he reaches at; the same characters that are upon the thing aimed at, will be imprinted upon the spirit of him that aims at it. When God and his glory are made our end, we shall find a silent likeness pass in upon us; the beauty of God will by degrees enter upon our souls.

4. In every deliberate action, let us reflect upon the divine purity *as a pattern.* Let us examine whether any thing we are prompted to, bears an impression of God upon it: whether it looks like a thing, that God him-

* Amor naturam induit & mores imbibit rei amatæ.

self would do in that case, were he in our natures, and in our circumstances. See whether it hath the livery of God upon it, how congruous it is to his nature; whether, and in what manner, the holiness of God can be glorified thereby; and let us be industrious in all this. For can such an imitation be easy which is resisted by the constant assaults of the flesh, which is discouraged by our own ignorance, and impressed by our faint and languishing desires after it? O! happy we, if there were such a heart in us.

A *fourth* exhortation. If holiness be a perfection belonging to the nature of God; then, where there is some weak conformity to the holiness of God, let us labour *to grow up in it*, and breathe after *fuller measures of it*. The more likeness we have to him, the more love we shall have from him. Communion will be suitable to our imitation; his love to himself in his essence will cast out beams of love to himself in his image. If God loves holiness in a lower measure, much more will he love it in a higher degree, because then his image is more illustrious and beautiful, and comes nearer to the lively lineaments of his own infinite purity. Perfection in any thing is more lovely and amiable than imperfection in any state; and the nearer any thing arrives to perfection, the further are those things separated from it which might cool an affection to it. An increase in holiness is attended with a manifestation of his love, *He that hath my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me, and he shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and I will manifest myself to him*, *John* 14. 21. It is a testimony of love to God, and God will not be behind-hand with the creature in kindness. He loves a holy man for some resemblance to him in his nature; but when there is an abounding in sanctified dispositions suitable to it, there is an increase of favour. The more we resemble the original, the more shall we enjoy the blessedness of that original. As any partake more of the divine likeness, they partake more of the divine happiness.

Fifth exhortation. Let us carry ourselves holily in a spiritual manner *in all our religious approaches to God;*

Holiness becomes thy house, O Lord for ever, *Psal.* 93. 5. This attribute should work in us a deep and reverential respect to God. This is the reason rendered why we should worship at his footstool, in the lowest posture of humility prostrate before him, because he is holy, *Psal.* 99. 5. Shoes must be put off from our feet, *Exod.* 3. 5, that is, lusts from our affections, every thing that our souls are clogged and defiled with, as the shoes are with dirt. He is not willing we should offer to him an impure soul, unclean hearts, carcasses putrified in vice. Our services are to be as free from profaneness, as the sacrifices of the law were to be free from sickliness or any blemish. Whatsoever is contrary to his purity is abhorred by him, and unlovely in his sight, and can meet with no other success at his hands, but a disdainful turning away both of his eye and ear, *Isa.* 1. 15. Since he is an immense purity, he will reject from his presence, and from having any communion with him, all that which is not conformable to him; as light chases away the darkness of the night, and will not mix with it. If we *stretch out our hands towards him*, we must *put iniquity far away from us;* the fruits of all service will else drop off to nothing. *Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant to the Lord;*—When? When the heart is purged by Christ sitting as a *purifier of silver*, *Mal.* 3. 3, 4. Not all the incense of the Indies yields him so sweet a savour as one spiritual act of worship from a heart estranged from the vileness of the world, and delighted with an affection to, and a desire of imitating, the purity of his nature.

Sixth exhortation. Let us address for holiness *to God the fountain of it.* As he is the author of bodily life in the creature, so he is the author of his own life, the life of God in the soul. By his holiness he makes men holy, as the sun by his light enlightens the air. He is not only the holy One, but *our* holy One, *Isa.* 43. 15. *The Lord that sanctifies us*, *Lev.* 20. 8. As he hath mercy to pardon us, so he hath holiness to purify us, the excellency of being a sun to comfort us, and a shield to protect us, giving *grace and glory*, *Psal.* 84. 11. Grace whereby we may have communion with him to our comfort, and

strength against our spiritual enemies for our defence; grace as our preparatory to glory, and grace growing up till it ripen in glory. He only can mould us into a divine frame; the great original can only derive the excellency of his own nature to us. We are too low, too lame to lift up ourselves to it; too much in love with our own deformity to admit of this beauty without a heavenly power inclining our desires for it, our affections to it, and our willingness to be partakers of it.

He can as soon set the beauty of holiness in a deformed heart, as he did the beauty of harmony in a confused mass when he made the world. He can as soon cause the light of purity to rise out of the darkness of corruption, as frame glorious spirits out of the insufficiency of nothing. His beauty does not decay, he hath as much in himself now as he had in his eternity; he is as ready to impart it as he was at the creation, only we must wait upon him for it, and be content to have it by small measures and degrees. There is no fear of our sanctification if we come to him as a God of holiness, since he is a *God of peace*, and the breach made by Adam is repaired by Christ; *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly*, &c. *Thess.* 1. 5. 23. He restores the sanctifying spirit which was withdrawn by the Fall, as he is a God pacified, and as his holiness is righted by the Redeemer. The beauty of it appears in its smiles upon a man in Christ, and is as ready to impart itself to the reconciled creature, as before justice was to punish the rebellious one. He loves to send forth the streams of this perfection into created channels, more than any else. He did not design the making the creature so powerful as he might, because power is not such an excellency in its own nature, but as it is conducted and managed by some other excellency. Power is indifferent, and may be used well or ill, according as the possessor of it is righteous or unrighteous. God makes not the creature so powerful as he might, but he delights to make the creature that waits upon him as holy as it can be, beginning it in this world, and ripening it in the other. It is from him we must expect it, and from him that we must beg it, and draw arguments from

the holiness of his nature to move him to work holiness in our spirits: we cannot have a stronger plea. Purity is the favourite of his own nature, and delights itself in the resemblances of it in the creature. Let us also go to God, to preserve what he hath already wrought and imparted. As we cannot attain it, so we cannot maintain it without him. God gave it Adam, and he lost it; when God gives it us, we shall lose it without his influencing and preserving grace. The channel will be without a stream, if the fountain do not bubble it forth; and the stream will vanish if the fountain does not constantly supply them. Let us apply ourselves to him for holiness as he is a God *glorious in holiness*. By this we honour God, and advantage ourselves.

END OF VOL. II.

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